

THE *H. F. L.*  
CONFSSIONAL: *R*

OR,

A Full and Free INQUIRY

INTO THE

RIGHT, UTILITY,

EDIFICATION, and SUCCESS,

Of Establishing

SYSTEMATICAL CONFESSIONS

OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE

IN PROTESTANT CHURCHES.

THE SECOND EDITION, ENLARGED:

With CORRECTIONS, and an Additional Preface  
in Answer to Dr. RUTHERFORTH's *Charge*.

Quàm vos facillumè agitis, quàm estis maxumè  
Potentes, dites, fortunati, nobiles ;  
Tam maxumè vos æquo animo æqua noscere  
Oportet, si vos voltis perhiberi probos.

TERENT.

L O N D O N :

Printed for S. BLADON, in *Pater-noster-row*.

MDCCLXVII.

*2 A A e*  
*25*



THE

# CONFESSIO: CONTENTS

A Full and Free Inquiry

CHAP. I

A Summary View of the Rise, Progress, and Success  
of the Protestant Cause, in  
EDUCATION, and SUCCESS.

CHAP. II

OF THE  
SYSTEMATICAL COMPLETION

OF FAITH AND DOCTRINE



THE SECOND VOLUME

With Corrections, and an additional Preface  
in Answer to Dr. BARNARD'S Charge.

Quam vos facillime agitis, quam esse verum, et  
Pecunia, dicit, etiam, etiam.

Tam maxime vos videtis, etiam, etiam, etiam  
Oportet, et vos videtis, etiam, etiam.

Printed for S. Bland, in Paternoster-Row.

MDCCLXXII.

C O N T E N T S.

C H A P. I.

*A summary View of the Rise, Progress, and Success  
of established Confessions of Faith and Doctrine  
in Protestant Churches.* Page 1

C H A P. II.

*The Claim of a Right to establish Confessions as Tests  
of Orthodoxy, in Protestant Churches, considered,*

C H A P. III.

*The Apology of the Remonstrants for Confessions,  
in consideration of their Expedience and Uti-  
lity, examined,*

C H A P. IV.

*A particular Examination of Bishop Burnet's Intro-  
duction to the Exposition of the xxxix Articles  
of the Church of England,*

C H A P. V.

*A View of the embarrassed and fluctuating Casuistry  
of those Divines, who do not approve of, or differ  
from, Bishop Burnet's Method of justifying Sub-  
scription*

iv C O N T E N T S.

*scription to the xxxix Articles of the Church of  
England,* Page 140

C H A P. VI.

*A particular Examination of the Sentiments and  
Reasonings of those Writers who have pleaded  
for a Latitude in subscribing to the Articles and  
Liturgy of the Church of England, upon the  
Supposition that every Protestant Church, must  
be consistently with its professing to assert and  
maintain Christian Liberty,* 202

C H A P. VII.

*An Attempt to discover whence the Practice of sub-  
scribing the xxxix Articles in different Senses,  
was derived; and by what sort of Casuists, and  
what sort of Reasoning, it was first propagated,  
and has been since espoused,* 245

C H A P. VIII.

*Concerning the Conclusions that arise from the fore-  
going Disquisitions,* 316

P R E F A C E



P R E F A C E

TO THE

SECOND EDITION:

CONTAINING

REMARKS on a late *Vindication of the Right of Protestant Churches to require the Clergy to subscribe to an established Confession of Faith and Doctrines.*

HÆ TIBI ERUNT ARTES!

THE favourable reception *The Confession* hath met with from the Public, though it will not be admitted as an argument of the merit of the book, is undeniably an argument of something of much more consequence. It is an argument, that the love of RELIGIOUS LIBERTY is still warm and vigorous in the hearts of a considerable number of the good people of *England*, notwithstanding the various endeavours of interested and irreligious men, in these latter as well as in

\* a

former

former times, to check and discourage it; and notwithstanding the desponding apprehensions of some good men, that these *sifters* had well nigh succeeded in their unrighteous attempts.

It now appears, that a little plain reasoning, illustrated by a few indisputable facts, in favour of this invaluable legacy of our Protestant Ancestors, hath been sufficient to engage the attention of many well-wishers to its preservation and perpetuity, who, perhaps, might not otherwise have been aware of the present importance of such a disquisition; but who, by having their observation turned upon the artful and indirect methods that have been taken by some of its insidious adversaries, under the mask of friendship, to diminish its estimation, may, by the blessing of God, be excited to a greater degree of vigilance, that this fountain of all true piety and evangelical virtue may never more be choaked up, by the rubbish of traditional formalities.

The *Confessional* hath likewise had the good fortune to make another valuable discovery; namely, that encroachments on religious liberty in Protestant communities, by whatever specious pretences they are introduced, can never be defended upon Protestant principles.

A Divine, of good learning and character, who occupies, with reputation, one of the first theological chairs in *Europe*, hath tried his strength

strength upon this fatherless production of the press<sup>a</sup>, without foreseeing, I dare say, that he would so suddenly meet with a more able opponent from another quarter; who hath shewn, in a masterly manner, how little definitions and distinctions, which pass, perhaps with applause, in the schools for sound and scientific, are to be depended upon, when confronted by scripture and common sense<sup>b</sup>.

In this excellent and decisive little tract, the author of the *Confessional* thought he had so far found his account, that he determined, when a second edition of his book was called for, to pass over, in the revival of it, the learned Professor's *Vindication* in profound silence, and to leave it in that state of inefficiency to which the author of the *Examination* had reduced it.

But some of his friends, by whose superior judgment he hath greatly profited on other occasions, observing to him, that some of Dr. Rutherford's strictures might be understood to affect the *Confessional* in particular, apart from his general argument, it was thought necessary, that particular answers should be given to these

<sup>a</sup> In a *Vindication* of the Right of Protestant Churches to require the Clergy to subscribe to an established Confession of Faith and Doctrines.

<sup>b</sup> *Examination* of Dr. Rutherford's Argument, respecting the Right of Protestant Churches to require the Clergy to subscribe to an established Confession, &c.



strictures; which accordingly will be found in some notes, subjoined to those passages against which the learned Professor hath pointed his efforts.

In running over the *Vindication*, the author of the *Confessional* could not avoid observing several flaws in the learned Professor's foundation, which have, in a great measure, been left untouched by the *Examiner*; who, perceiving that it would be sufficient for his purpose to expose the futility of the Professor's *conclusions*, candidly left him his *premisses*, whereon to erect another sort of fabrick, in case occasion and encouragement should once more call him forth to vindicate the right of requiring subscriptions in Protestant Churches.

The author of the *Confessional* is not a little concerned, that he cannot follow this benevolent example. For, as it hath been thought proper that he should make his own particular defence, it is become indispensably necessary for him to lay open the several infirmities of the Professor's *foundation*, which will now appear in a few short remarks on the three first paragraphs of his *Vindication*.

The learned Professor opens his charge with a recital of the thirty-sixth canon of the church of *England*, as if that particular law of our church was to have been the *principal*, if not the *sole* object of his *Vindication*. Nor, indeed, had

had that been the case, and supposing him to have succeeded in his undertaking, would he, in my apprehension, have come short of his *more general* design. For, after having effectually vindicated the *right* of the Protestant Church of *England* to require subscription to her confession of faith and doctrines, upon the foot of this canon, he might safely have inferred the right of all other Protestant Churches, as a thing of course; inasmuch as it may be presumed, that none of their ordinances or injunctions, requiring subscription to their respective confessions, are expressed in terms more strict and precise than those of this canon.

But, instead of undertaking the particular vindication of our own system, he declares, that "he does not design, at present, to enquire into the *force* and *meaning* of this subscription [the subscription enjoined by this canon], when it is applied to these Articles [the xxxix Articles of the Church of *England*] in particular." And herein I cannot but commend his discretion; for, as it happens, we have certain laws of the *State* enjoining subscription, which do *not* require that *every* person who is received into the ministry, or is admitted to an ecclesiastical living, shall acknowledge, by subscribing, &c. that *all* and *every* the thirty-nine Articles are agreeable to the word of God. The case stands thus:

The statute, 13 Eliz. c. 12, enjoins subscription to all the articles of religion which *only concern the confession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments*, comprised in a book imprinted, intituled, "*Articles*," &c. as in the title of our present Articles. This Bill had passed the House of Commons five years before, namely, 8 Eliz. and was rejected by the Lords; and being now resumed in 1571, some members of the House of Commons, and among the rest Sir Peter Wentworth, were sent to the Archbishop of Canterbury [Parker], for the Articles which then [*viz.* 1571] passed the House. The Archbishop took that occasion to expostulate with the members who were sent to him, *Why they did put out of the Book the articles for the homilies, consecrating of bishops, and such like?* [meaning, by the *limiting clause*, confining subscription to articles only of a certain tenor.] Surely, Sir, said Wentworth, *because we were so occupied in other matters, that we had no time to examine them how they agreed with the word of God.* What! said the Archbishop, *surely you mistook the matter; you will refer yourselves wholly to us therein.* Sir Peter replied, *No, by the faith I bear to God, we will pass nothing before we understand what it is; for that were but to make you Popes; make you Popes upa list; for we will make you none<sup>c</sup>.*

<sup>c</sup> Journal of Parliament, by Sir Simmonds D'Ewes, p. 239.



From this conversation it appears,

1. That the Lay part of the legislature, of that time, thought themselves as competent judges of what did, or did not, agree with the word of God, as the bishops.

2. That the Lay part of the legislature of that time thought, that the leaving it to the governors of the church, exclusive of themselves, to determine what articles of religion should be established for the public confession, was to make them Popes: That is to say, invest them with a power which, upon the principles of the Reformation, did not belong to them.

3. That, by passing the Act with the *limiting* clause, the legislature did not only *think*, but did *determine*, that the governors of the Church of England had no right to require the inferior clergy to subscribe to any confession of faith and doctrines, without the authority of Parliament.

4. That, by passing the Act *with the limiting clause*, no other subscription is required by it than to those Articles which *only concern the confession of the true Christian Faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments*.

5. That no other Act having repealed this Act, or in any wise contravened it, touching subscription to the Articles of Religion, and the Act of Uniformity in particular, 14 Car. II. having referred to it, as the *standing Law*, concerning

subscription to the Articles of Religion; the limiting clause is in full force to this hour.

Great hath been the wrangling upon the question, Whether the clergy are not, by this Act, obliged to subscribe to the whole xxxix Articles, notwithstanding the limitation in the first paragraph of it. The latest account we have of this matter is from Dr. Burn, who says, that, "in practice, it seemeth to have been generally understood, that the subsequent clauses in the Act, requiring subscription in time to come to the said articles, do refer to the whole book of Articles abovementioned, and not to those only which were at that time required to be assented to and subscribed." *Eccl. Law*, Title, *Articles*, p. 74. I am unwilling to ask, in whose practice it seemeth to have been so understood? as a practice directly contrary to an Act of Parliament can convey no very advantageous idea of the practiser's integrity. The Doctor proceeds to give the reason why it hath been so understood: "For, saith he, there is no other Act of Parliament that enjoins the subscription of persons admitted to benefices." But, what then? Does this circumstance give the practisers authority to act as if there was? What would become of our liberties and properties, if practisers in civil cases were allowed to make laws according to their own understandings, in default of better authority from an Act of Parliament? To go on a little farther. This learned and worthy person, by observing that "the Act of Uniformity, 14 C. II. doth not extend to persons admitted to benefices, in this respect," seems to think, that the Act of Uniformity extends to some persons, in some other respect, than the Act of the 13 Eliz. extends to persons admitted to benefices. But though the learned Canonist hath either forgot, or did not chuse to remark it, it is certain, that neither Heads of Colleges nor Lecturers are obliged, by the Act of Uniformity, to subscribe to any other Articles than the xxxix Articles mentioned in the statute of 13 Eliz. and the Articles mentioned in that statute to be subscribed, are those Articles which only concern the confession of the true Christian Faith, and the Doctrine of the Sa-

Now,

Now, had the learned Professor vindicated this canon upon the same principles, and by the

ceraments. So that it should seem, whoever requires any clergyman to subscribe any other Articles of Religion, besides those mentioned and described in the first section of the 13 *Elix.* hath not the authority of any statute for that practice; and how far such practice can be justified in a Protestant State, and in a Country that calls itself a Land of religious and civil Liberty, by any other authority, is to me an impenetrable secret. I cannot leave this subject without bearing my testimony to the candor and moderation of many of *Dr. Burn's* remarks, in relation to ecclesiastical authority. Of the former, I take his giving the whole conversation between Archbishop *Parker* and Sir *Peter Wentworth* to be a striking instance. The Doctor, indeed, tells us, that *Wentworth* was sent to the Tower, for the speech wherein he related this conversation himself in the House of Commons. But, lest this should make some awkward impressions on the unwary reader, it will be necessary to remark, that *Wentworth's* assertion, concerning the Articles of Religion, made no part of his offence, as appears from his examination, printed immediately after his speech, in the Journal of Sir *Stimmonds Dr. Ewart*. As I am upon this subject, I shall take the freedom to rectify another oversight of *Dr. Burn's*, which is too material to be passed by. At the bottom of page 75, he says, "and, by the statute 13 *Elix.* if any person shall advisedly maintain—any doctrine—contrary—to any of the "xxxix Articles," &c. There is no mention in the whole Act of xxxix Articles. The words are, any of the said Articles, viz. the doctrinal and sacramental Articles mentioned in the first section. This paragraph, indeed, in the Act 13 *Elix.* here cited by *Dr. Burn*, is a plain proof, that by the words the said Articles, or any of the said Articles, no other Articles are meant, in any of the subsequent clauses, besides those Articles described in the first section. They must be little conversant in the history of those times, who can suppose, that the Parliament of 1571 would consign any minister to censure, and finally to de-

same



same arguments he employs to prove the *general right*, he would, too probably, have laid a foundation for some variance between church and state. For the Statute, with these limiting words in it, being still in full force, and not contravened by any other Statute whatever, the learned Professor, in vindicating the right of church-governors to require this *canonical* subscription of *every* minister, and to *all* and *every* the xxxix Articles, under an authority *different* from that which enacted the *limiting* law, could hardly have avoided running foul of the *civil* constitution of his country; more especially as the argument, by which he vindicates the *general right* of Protestant church-governors to require subscription to *some* confession of faith and doctrines, must conclude for the general right of such governors to *establish* any confession of faith and doctrines, to which they have a right to re-

privation, for maintaining any thing contrary to the *disciplinarian* Articles. Archbishop *Laud's* word will pass, where mine will not; I will, therefore, risque this matter upon his credit. "If you will be pleased to look back, says he, and consider "who they were that governed businesses in 1571, and rid the "church almost at their pleasure; and how potent the ancestors of these libellers [*Prynne, Burton, Bastwick, &c.*] began then to grow, you will think it no hard matter to have "the Articles printed, and this clause [meaning the first clause "of the xxth Article] left out." *Rushworth, Hist. Coll. Vol. III. Appendix, p. 131.* Here, I suppose, we have the limitation upon subscriptions, 13 *Elin.* sufficiently accounted for.

quire

quire subscription; otherwise his argument has very little business with the writer, who led the learned Professor to employ the thoughts of the Essex clergy on the subject of subscriptions. A right to require subscription, without a right to establish the formulary to be subscribed, would amount to little more than Glendower's right to call spirits from the vasty deep. To which any one might rejoin, with equal pertinence and propriety, as Percy does to the said Glendower:

*Why, so can I, and so can any man;  
But will they come when you do call?*

This may serve for one answer, among others, that might be given, to a question which I have heard often asked, viz. Why the learned Professor would set at the head of his discourse, as it were by way of a text, a particular law of a particular church, into the force and meaning of which he did not design to enquire?

But, to borrow his own language, upon a later occasion, "instead of considering what he omits, we will enquire how well he succeeds in what he attempts."

He undertakes, then, "to vindicate the general right which the governors of our own, or of any other Protestant church, have to enjoin, that all those, who are admitted to the

\* See Dr. Rutherford's second Vindication, p. 2.

“office of public teaching in it, shall subscribe  
“to the truth of *SOME* confession of faith and  
“doctrines.”

*Some* confession of faith and doctrines there is undoubtedly in the Scriptures; and there is nothing in the plan of *Vindication*, as it is here laid out, which hinders you from understanding, that the right to be vindicated extends no farther than to the enjoining a subscription to the truth of the *Scripture*-confession of faith and doctrines. But, as we go along with the learned Professor, we perceive, that, besides the *general right* to enjoin subscriptions, there is a *general benefit* proposed by them; for the securing of which, it seems, a subscription to the truth of the scriptures, or of a confession of faith and doctrines, in merely scripture-words, would not be sufficient.

But, if so, is not the learned Professor's *design* worded in too loose and captious a manner? Is there not some *descriptive* word wanting, to enable us to distinguish the *sort* of confession to which church-governors are said to have a right to enjoin subscription, from the confession of faith and doctrines contained in the scriptures, or a confession of faith and doctrines drawn up in merely scripture-terms?

Left, therefore, it should be said, that a learned Professor, in a celebrated University, had put more into his *conclusion* than was contained



tained in his *promises*, I will venture, with his leave, to supply this descriptive word, which is some way or other dropped out of the proposition. The clause should have run thus—*shall subscribe to the truth of some SYSTEMATICAL confession of faith and doctrines.* And I make this emendation with the more freedom, as, without it, some people might be of opinion, that the learned Professor's dispute with the author of the *Confessional* could hardly be kept on foot; or, at the best, would presently dwindle into insignificance: For the latter, having allowed that “a declaration from a public pastor, that he believes the scriptures, and will make the contents of them the rule of his teaching, is a very moderate security, and no more than the society with which he is connected may with reason expect;” the question, in whom the right of requiring this security is vested? is hardly worth debating.

We are now arrived at the corner-stone of the argument, which is thus laid down. “The universal church of Christ is a society, which he instituted, and of which he is the head, including in it all those, who profess to believe in his name, and have been received by baptism into the number of his disciples.”

From this definition we are referred to LOCKE on *Toleration*, Works, vol. ii. p. 255, which

<sup>1</sup> *Confessional*, p. 344, of the former edition.

seems

seems to denote, if not that the definition was taken from *Locke* on *Toleration*, yet that it is agreeable to his sense expressed in the page referred to. But having a violent suspicion, that Mr. *Locke* would not, at any rate, have subscribed the Professor's definition, I resolved to have recourse to the passage cited; but the edition I use, being that of 1727, exhibiting nothing applicable to the Professor's definition, in the page so numbered, I was obliged to make a random search, and, for some time, in vain; which I mention by way of intimation to the learned *Vindicator*, that though he is above being *seised* himself, yet that we, his inferiors, are humble enough to desire as express directions as we can obtain to the *sense* and *meaning* of those authors with whom it is our fortune to be concerned.

At length, at page 235, of the 2<sup>d</sup> vol. of *Locke's Works*, of the edition abovementioned, I found the following definition of *a church*.

"*A church*, says this incomparable writer, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God, in such manner as they judge acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls."

This is all the definition of a church I can find in Mr. *Locke's Letters on Toleration*. If there is any other in them more to the learned Pro-

\* Dr. *Rutherford's* second Vindication, p. 4.

20 fessor's purpose, he will certainly be able to produce it. If there is not, it will, I apprehend, be incumbent upon him to reconcile *his own* definition with *this*. The Professor's GOOD FAITH requires this of him.

But whether he can accomplish this reconciliation or not, if the learned Professor's definition will stand the test of a *Protestant* examination, it will be, we own, less material to him what Mr. *Locke* thought of any church.

The first objection I make to the learned Professor's definition is, that it wants explanation. He hath not informed us, whether this universal church of Christ is a *visible* or an *invisible* church; an omission, I apprehend, of no small consequence to the subsequent parts of the learned Professor's *Vindication*. Till this be known, we are at a loss how far to admit his scheme of church-government. We must, therefore, try to find out this circumstance as well as we can.

The members of the *invisible* church of Christ, who, as all judicious Divines agree, are in a state of actual acceptance with him, are not discernible by any external marks or tokens whatever. But in this definition we have *two* outward visible marks, pointing out those who are members of Christ's universal church. 1. Profession of belief; and, 2. reception into the number of Christ's disciples by baptism. These  
*visible*



*visible* tokens determine the Professor's *universal* church to be a *visible* church.

Now I own it would puzzle me extremely, if it were my affair, how to provide for the government of this *universal visible* church, otherwise than by introducing an *universal visible* governor. Christ, the head, is *invisible*; and we have no way of coming at his directions for church-government, but by having recourse to the written record of them in the scriptures. But though these written directions might do well enough for the government of one of Mr. Locke's *voluntary* societies, in a state of *independency*, yet I much question how far they would be deemed sufficient to settle an uniformity of government among particular churches; which being, according to the Professor, *parts* of the *universal visible* church, must be not only in *connection* with it, but *dependent* upon it. A *particular* society, which is a part of an *universal* society, can neither be *voluntary* nor *independent*.

Again, we shall hear presently of some persons, "who are appointed, under Christ, to "superintend and govern particular churches." I hardly think the learned Professor will pretend, that these persons receive their appointment *immediately* from Christ. How they come by it, we shall have occasion to ask by and by. In the mean time, the matter of fact is, that they differ

differ widely from each other, not only concerning the nature and extent of this appointment, but concerning the authority under which they respectively claim it. Allow the particular churches, over which these persons preside, to be *parts* of the *universal visible* church, and you must allow their governors or superintendents to be *members* of an *universal visible* government; but how shall these superintendents, or particular governors, who differ so widely concerning their authority and appointment, be brought into order, without the superintendency of an universal visible governor? Does not the learned Professor know, that it is from this undeniable fact, *viz.* the variance among particular churches concerning church-authority, and this absurd and groundless pretence, that particular churches are *de jure* parts of the universal visible church, laid together, that the Papists infer the necessity of an *universal visible* church-governor?

But this *necessity* all Protestant churches vehemently disclaim, and the church of *England* as vehemently and as loudly as any of them. And, therefore, I should think the church of *England* would hardly agree to have any of her rights founded upon so precarious a definition of the universal church of Christ, as leaves an opening whereat the Pope may be slipped in upon her unawares.

The Professor proceeds: "The end and purpose for which this society was instituted, is "to lead men to eternal life, by the preservation and advancement of true religion."

A society, *instituted by Christ himself*, "for the "end and purpose of leading men to eternal "life," implies, that no man can attain eternal life, except he is a member of *this* society. Otherwise we must say, that Christ instituted a society for an end and purpose that might be brought about without it, which no true believer will allow. The result is, that to be in communion with *this* society, is necessary to salvation.

The reader will not forget, that *this* society is an *universal visible church*, of which all particular churches are parts, the church of *Rome* as well as others, as hath been shewn by the accurate *Examiner* of Dr. *Rutherford's* Vindication. Therefore, to be in communion with the church of *Rome* is necessary to salvation.

An ingenious Prelate of the established church, and no enemy to church authority, was so sensible whither the necessity of church-communion, even with a national protestant establishment, would conduct us, that he hesitates not to declare, that this doctrine "alters the *terms of salvation*, as they are delivered in the Gospel, "which are, *faith in Christ, and repentance*  
6 "towards



“*towards God*; by adding others to them, such  
 “*as fellow-membership in church-communion.*”—  
 “A church, adds he, acting with this spirit, not  
 “only throws off subjection; but assumes the  
 “sovereignty; and is no longer the sheepfold  
 “of the good shepherd, but the den of Anti-  
 “christ, the thief, and robber.” What, then,  
 must we think of the *churchman* who preaches  
 this doctrine?

Again. “Though for the better conveyance  
 “of the glad tidings of salvation, says this  
 “learned Bishop, it was expedient that the dis-  
 “ciples of Christ should be formed into a kind  
 “of *sodality*; yet the founder of our holy faith  
 “never intended this, or any other religious  
 “society, to be part of its essentials, as appears  
 “from his express words in my text (*Luke ix. 49.*)  
 “where he receives one, who was propagating  
 “the faith in him, to all the benefits and prero-  
 “gatives of his religion; though he was out of  
 “the pale of that fraternity, he had just then  
 “instituted <sup>h</sup>.”

But our Professor, we see, not content with  
 confining the necessity of *church-membership* to  
 some particular church, hath, by making every  
 particular church a part of the *universal visible*  
 church, extended the necessity of *church-member-*

<sup>h</sup> Bishop Warburton's first sermon on *Church Communion*, in  
 the 2d volume of his Sermons, p. 161—163.

*ship* to salvation, to the *universal visible* society, and consequently to *every particular* church, whose members have to shew the *two common marks* of their belonging to the *universal visible* church, which, without doubt, the Papists have to shew as evidently as the members of any *other particular* church.

It is true, our Professor, to get rid of a *difficulty* he met with in the *Confessional*, hath thought fit to say, "separate churches are, in respect of one another, like separate men. If each individual Protestant holds his religion *independently* of all others, so does each particular protestant church i."

I will not suspect the IF in this passage to be meant for a drawback upon the concession, in case of need; because the learned Professor hath acknowledged it in the amendment of his bill <sup>k</sup>, as an *express declaration*, that "each particular protestant church holds its religion *independently* of all others;" which, however, cannot be true, if *each particular* church is "a part of the *universal visible* church, instituted by Christ himself." Where there is a religious connection, there must be a religious dependency, and especially where the connection is

i Vindication, p. 15, 16.

k Second Vindication, p. 20.

such, that it cannot be broken, without defeating the end and purpose of the institution by which it was created.

We have here, then, two plain propositions laid down by one and the same writer. 1. *Every particular church is a part of the universal visible church, instituted by Christ himself.* And, 2. *Each particular protestant church holds its religion independently of ALL others.* Now, as one of these propositions must, on the mere consideration of self-consistency, be either *retracted* or *quibbled away*, I cannot but hope the learned Professor will abide by the latter, and then let him work his will upon the former and welcome. It will give me great pleasure to have it in my power to congratulate a very valuable part of his Majesty's subjects, I mean the Protestant Dissenters, on this happy change in their religious affairs. On this principle of *independency*, all idea of *schism*, which hath stuck so long to their respective churches, must vanish away of course. I am of opinion it may even *christianize* the honest Quakers: For, the connection and dependency of *all* particular religious societies upon the Professor's *universal visible church* being dissolved, the sincerely pious and good among *them* may still be members of the *invisible church* of Christ, notwithstanding the absence of *one* of the marks, without which they could not, according to the Professor, be *included* even in the large



and capacious bosom of the *universal visible* church.

As to what may become of *national churches, exclusive establishments, test-laws, and alliances*, in those protestant states where each protestant church holds its religion *independently* of all others, I list not to inquire. They are already in very good hands; I mean those of the learned Professor, who, I doubt not, will take sufficient care that they come to no detriment, notwithstanding the awkward aspect his doctrine of *independency* may seem to bear towards them.

But to go on with the learned Professor. "It is therefore the duty of those who are appointed under him [Christ] to superintend and govern particular churches—"

Before we proceed any farther, pray, who are they that are so appointed, and how do they come by their appointment? These are no unnecessary questions; for, till we know the men, and the authority by which they act, we can neither judge of the extent of *their* duty in governing, nor of *our* duty in submitting to them.

The learned Vindicator does not say they are appointed BY Christ, but UNDER Christ; which implies, that their appointment is conveyed to them from Christ through some *medium*; which, a the governors themselves, as well as the churches

churches they superintend, are *visible*, should be *visible* too.

One thing must be agreed, on all hands, namely, that an *immediate visible* appointment of governors or superintendents *under* Christ, and *by* Christ himself, was never vouchsafed to any churches, since Christ's appearance on earth, but to the first christian churches in which his apostles ministered. I would, therefore, willingly be informed, how the governors of protestant churches can make their title, or their appointment, under Christ, to govern, appear to the satisfaction of the churches to be governed; and, particularly, to govern in the manner contended for by the learned Professor, in the course of his Vindication?

The most natural expedient suggested by the Professor's scheme, is for particular churches, which, *ex hypothesi*, are *parts* of the *universal visible* church, to apply to the *universal visible* church, to have such governors appointed and properly authorized, under Christ, to serve their several occasions as they arise. But, then, how could the *universal visible* church accommodate them with such governors, otherwise than by referring them to the *universal visible* head? whose substitutes the governors, appointed by him, of course must be. But Protestants, as observed above, would have their objections to this sort of appointment, as they absolutely deny

that any such character, as that of an *universal visible* governor, has any business to interpose in any such appointment; not to mention, that for a *particular Protestant* church to apply to the *universal visible* church, on any such account, would be to give up that *independency* which the learned Professor expressly declares to belong to each of them.

There are some who tell us, that church-governors take or receive this *appointment under Christ*, by way of succession from the apostles. But this will hardly pass with Protestants, who consider that the pretended governors of the *universal visible* church say the very same thing, in asserting the plenitude of papal power. And it happens, that some Protestant Divines, of the first account among us, in putting a negative upon this claim of the *Roman* pontifs, have done it in such terms, and by such arguments, as clearly and undeniably prove, that the claim of apostolic succession, made by *any* church-governors, is not at *all* more admissible than the claim of the Pope to the succession of St. *Peter* in particular<sup>1</sup>.

Mr. *Locke*, indeed, hath effectually blocked up this channel of *appointment* by an argument, which will admit of no reply.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. *Whitby's* Sermon on *Matth. xii. 7*, intitled, *Ritual Observations to give place to Charity*; but more especially the *Appendix*.

“Some,



" Some, says he, perhaps may object, that no  
" such society [as the *voluntary* society above-  
" mentioned] can be said to be a true church,  
" unless it have in it a bishop or presbyter,  
" with *ruling authority* derived from the very  
" apostles, and continued down to the present  
" times by an uninterrupted succession.

" To these I answer, in the first place, let  
" them shew me the edict by which Christ has  
" imposed that law upon his church. And let  
" not any man think me impertinent, if, in a  
" thing of this consequence, I require that the  
" terms of that edict be very express and posi-  
" tive: For the promise he has made us, that  
" *wheresoever two or three are gathered together*  
" *in his name, he will be in the midst of them,*  
" seems to imply the contrary. Whether such  
" an assembly want any thing necessary to a true  
" church, pray do you consider. Certain I am,  
" that nothing can there be wanting to the salva-  
" tion of souls, which is sufficient to our pur-  
" pose m."

It appears, then, that our learned Professor  
hath left his premisses extremely short and in-  
sufficient, in this material article, for the support  
of his conclusions. For the *appointment* of church-  
governors *under Christ*, being the supposed foun-

<sup>m</sup> First Letter on *Toleration*, Works, fol. 1727. vol. ii.  
p. 236.

dation of those *rights*, and that *authority*, which the Professor vindicates to them, and to which his opponents question their title, it is by no means to be taken for granted; but will require, on the part of the Vindicator, the clearest and most explicit proof.

*But we must take the Professor's performance as we find it*; and the next point that comes under consideration is the *duty* of these church-governors.—“It is, therefore, the duty of those  
“who are appointed under him to superintend  
“and govern particular churches, which are  
“only parts of the universal church, to secure  
“and promote, as far as they are able, the true  
“faith and doctrines of the Gospel.” *Vind.*  
p. 2.

To this the very candid *Examiner*, giving the Professor credit for this *appointment*, and passing by some equivocal words, which would otherwise have required more immediate explanation, answers as follows: “This is as readily granted  
“as the other (the proposition in the foregoing  
“period): granted, however, not as a just de-  
“duction of a duty *peculiar* to church-governors,  
“but of a duty incumbent on *every* christian  
“man, on *all* the members of *every* particular  
“church, whatever office they may or may not  
“bear in the same.”

\* *Examination*, p. 33.

But

But this was not what the Professor wanted, and yet, unhappily, was as much as he could demand: For, as the *peculiarity* of the duty depended upon the nature and circumstances of the *appointment*, which he had rested upon *his own bare word*, and as he had limited the duty, even with respect to church-governors, by the words *as far as they are able*, he could not safely deny, that it was *equally* the duty of every christian man, who should have abilities *equally* with a church-governor, to secure and promote the true faith and doctrines of the Gospel; for this would have been to deny, that it is the duty of every christian to instruct, exhort, and admonish his fellow members, as far as he is able.

But the *peculiarity* could not, after all, be spared; and thus the Professor endeavours to recover his title to it.

“This duty, which is common to all christians;  
 “is to be discharged by each, in such a manner  
 “as is suitable to his particular station; and, in  
 “every society, the station of the governors of  
 “it makes it their *peculiar* duty to take care, as  
 “far as they are able, that the other members  
 “of it, in their respective stations and callings,  
 “advance the proper ends of it, by the proper  
 “and legitimate means.”

Second Vindication, p. 28.

Now



Now the learned Professor hath told us, in express terms, that: "the *only* legitimate means "of advancing and preserving the true religion "of Christ, are instructions in the faith and "doctrines, which he, and his apostles in his "name, delivered to mankind, with exhortations "and admonitions to attend to them, to embrace "them, to persevere in them, and, by a pious "and virtuous life and conversation, to bring "forth the proper fruits of them." *Vind.* p. 3.

Would the learned Professor, then, by thus limiting a *common duty* to *particular stations*, be understood to mean, that there are christians, to whose particular station it is *unsuitable* to advance and preserve the true religion of Christ, as far as they are able, by *these* legitimate means? or, that it is *unsuitable* to the particular stations of some christians to advance and preserve true religion, as far as they are able, by *any* means whatever? If it be not *unsuitable* for a christian, in any station, to advance and preserve true religion, as far as he is able, by *some* means, *what* means must he make use of, if these *only legitimate* means are *unsuitable* to his particular station?

Or, would the learned Professor be understood to mean, that *these* means are *only* then *legitimate* and *proper* means, when in the hands of church-governors;

governors; and *improper* and *illegitimate* in the hands of men in *other* stations? If this is his meaning, what is the *duty* he speaks of, as *common to all christians*? And, if neither of these is his meaning, what use would he make of his *analogical* argument, drawn from the government in *every* society, towards proving the *peculiarity* he wants to *vindicate* to his church-governors? Or, lastly, would he be understood to mean, that the society he speaks of, as instituted by Christ himself, for the end and purpose of leading men to eternal life, is *analogous* to *every* society instituted for *temporal* ends and purposes?

To these questions, I apprehend, the learned Professor will be obliged to give answers, for the satisfaction of his concurrent, the *Examiner*.

However, I cannot but consider the passage I have just cited, from the second Vindication, as a plain overture towards a compromise; and methinks I discern, even through this obscurity and confusion of language, what terms would content the learned Professor.—“It is the duty, he tells us, of those who are appointed, under Christ, to superintend and govern particular churches—to *secure* and *promote*, as far as they are able, the true faith and doctrines of the Gospel.”

Now

Now it seems to me very likely, that the learned Professor would allow the *promoting* the true faith, &c. to be a duty *common* to all christians, provided he might have leave to *appropriate* the duty of *securing* the true faith and doctrines of the Gospel to the station of church-governors.

To trust the duty of *securing*, &c. in the hands of the Laity, might be attended with great inconveniences. The people, in that case, might put in their claim to the *right* of sifting and ascertaining the faith, and soundness in doctrine, of their respective pastors, even after they had passed through the hands of their church-governors. Whereas the governors of the church, having previously *secured* the *true* faith in an established *confession*, the duty of *promoting* it in the terms of that confession, might be safely intrusted with christian men in *other* stations.

The learned Professor, however, must excuse us, if we take a little time to consider how far it may be adviseable for us to accede to this partition of duty. We shall desire, in the first place, to know, what he means by the word *secure*, when applied to the faith and doctrines of the Gospel? We shall, then, request to be informed, against *what* that faith and those doctrines *want* to be *secured*? Whether, with respect to their being *recorded*, they are not full as well



well secured in the scriptures as in any *peculiar* archives in the keeping of church-governors? And, with respect to their impressions on the human mind or intellect, whether church-governors, by virtue of any *peculiar* powers or appointments, can pretend to *secure* any thing relating to them, besides the bare *outward profession* of them? And, lastly, whether the duty of *securing* the faith and doctrines of the Gospel, when *appropriated* to church-governors, may not, at the long run, end in the application of a sort of means, nearly related to a *Cardinal's Hat* and an *Inquisition*; and more particularly, if the religious societies they govern are instituted upon the same plan with *every other* society?

I have now only to add a few words, concerning the *candor* and *ingenuity* of our learned Professor, in the *management* of his *Vindication*, which will sufficiently appear by a short comparison of his *Exordium* with his *Peroration*.

What he begins to vindicate is only "a general right, which governors of protestant churches have to require assent and subscription to the truth of some confession of faith and doctrines;" which they, who can satisfy themselves concerning the appointment of his church-governors, might be ready enough to grant him, as that may seem to imply no more

*Vindication, p. 1.*

than

than a right to require subscription to the Scriptures; and, likewise, as he seems particularly shy of even attempting the defence of the confession of his own church. But they, who stoop to this line, will find themselves drawn in with a witness, in the last page of the pamphlet; where he claims, for his church-governors, "a right to *secure* the teaching of such doctrines to the members of their church as they judge, upon the best information they can get, to be agreeable to the truth of the Gospel &c." A claim, which, if it should be admitted, would serve to *vindicate* the particular confession of every church in Christendom, whether Protestant or not: For will not the governors of the church of Rome say, that they go upon the best information they can get?

The claim, we see, is founded exactly as it might be, if the scriptures of the New Testament were lost, and the doctrines of them no way recoverable, but by such information as scraps of tradition, and mutilated and imperfect citations in some old books, would afford. Not the least room is there left, as this claim is stated, for a suspicion that the written Gospel, exhibiting the very doctrines of Christ and his apostles, is still in being, and in a condition to be consulted by *every man*, who wants or desires

<sup>a</sup> *Vindication*, p. 18.

information.

information. Not the least shadow of a supposition, that, upon the principles of the Protestant Reformation, every christian not only may, if he will, but is in duty bound to search these Scriptures, for his own information, concerning the rule both of his faith and duty, and to follow what he finds there, at all worldly hazards. The whole is founded upon the presumption, that no member of the church, who is *not* a church-governor, may have *better*, or *so good*, or indeed *any* information, concerning the agreement of such and such doctrines with the truth of the Gospel, but what his church-governors are pleased to impart to him. And, what is the strangest part of the story, this claim is put in by the learned Professor, for the governors of protestant churches, even while he is pretending to shew the difference between those churches and the church of Rome?

The learned Professor tells us, that "this difference is *remarkable*. The church of Rome cannot change its doctrines, without giving up its pretensions to infallibility; whereas Protestant Churches may be better informed at one time than at another, and may therefore change them, without any inconsistency."

That, however, is just as it happens. Before we get to the bottom of the page, we find there are cases, wherein protestant church-governors



cannot change the confessions of their churches, without being *inconsistent*; namely, without such a weakness and levity as is unbecoming their office, and *inconsistent* with the trust committed to them." This case happens to be, when they are "led away by every one who thinks himself able to reform it; and as often as any are found who dislike the faith and doctrines contained in it."

To be sure, this is *fairly* and *ingenuously* stated, as will appear by a short view of Protestant Churches, with respect to their confessions, since the commencement of the Reformation.

Some of the confessions in Protestant Churches have been *established* near two hundred years, during which time various remonstrances have been made by the members of those churches respectively, not only concerning the precarious doctrines contained in the confession, but against the *establishment* of any such systematical formularies as tests in Protestant Churches. Even some of the wisest and best of the governors of those churches have confessed, that requiring subscription to such formularies is a *great imposition*; and have wished to be *well rid* of some things maintained in them, as matters of which *no good account could be given*. And such, indeed, has been the language of the most eminent, or at least the most liberal-spirited writers in all Protestant Churches, that they have condemned them,

them, if not in express terms, yet by plain and direct consequences, to be drawn from their principles and reasonings.

This, I suppose, will be considered, by the candid reader, to be a different case from that stated by the Professor; where it is represented as if only here and there a conceited wrong-head, or no body knows who, pretending to the character of a reformer, had expressed their *dislike* of the established confession, without offering any reason.

Now it is well known, that, in some of those churches where these confessions are now, and have been established for the length of time abovementioned, church-governors have never once taken their church-confession into serious and solemn consideration; never once submitted it to the fair and impartial examination of learned and unbiaſſed men; or ever declared themselves ready to make such alterations in it as might, upon such examination, appear to be reasonable, necessary, or edifying to the community in which they presided. Have they not rather discouraged all inquiries into the real merits of it? Have not some of them fortified their confession with canons, and terrific menaces, to discourage all disquisitions of that tendency? Have not particular persons been in former times persecuted, in latter times brow-beaten,

beaten, and marked for their even modest, and respectful addresses to their church-governors to have such matters examined, and, if needful, reformed?

To what purpose is it, then, to say of those churches, of whose governors this hath been the conduct, that *they make no pretensions to infallibility*? Are not these the genuine, the natural, the constant effects of those pretensions? To what purpose is it to say of those Protestant Churches, which have never sought for better information, that *they may be better informed at one time than another*? To what purpose is it to say, that it is not necessary a Protestant Church should always maintain the same doctrines, when nothing but such necessity can excuse the refusal of some Protestant Churches, even upon the most reasonable remonstrances of pious and learned men, to review their doctrines; and when it is said too, by the same man, and almost in the same breath, that it is *unbecoming the office of church-governors, and inconsistent with the trust committed to them, to change them*; and this upon the disingenuous and false supposition, that neither the remonstrances, nor the men who have made them, were considerable enough to deserve the least regard? And, lastly, upon what grounds can the learned Professor pretend, that *all Protestant Churches are open to better information,* when



when he himself must know, that some of them have shut up their confessions in such fortresses and inclosures, as are, with respect to any better information, impenetrable and inaccessible.

Indeed, upon one supposition, mentioned by the learned Professor, *viz.* that Protestant Churches, though not infallible, are always in the right, nothing can be more impertinent than to solicit them to change any thing that has once got an establishment among them. Our learned *Vindicator* finds fault with this saying, as containing more *simplicity of expression* than *justness of sentiment*. But the *justness of sentiment* does not, I apprehend, come so immediately in question, as the *truth of the fact*; and that is what makes the *expression* *sharp* so much. Be that as it may, the Professor dislikes the sentiment, and therefore would mend it; which he tries to do, by telling us, that though protestant churches, or rather church-governors, are ever so wrong in their doctrines, yet, if they *think* themselves in the right, they are obliged to abide by them; against which there would be little to say, if the Professor's consequence were not, that the duty of church-governors, under this persuasion, leads them to oblige others, who are otherwise persuaded, to abide by them too, on the peril of wanting the good things these churches and church-governors have

have to bestow; and, if this is the case, I do not see why protestant church-governors, as well as others, should *not* be infallible.

But, after all, is it a fact to be depended upon, that "all governors of Protestant Churches have always *thought* the doctrines "of their established confessions to be right?" Has the learned Professor never heard of any of them, who have held, written, or taught any thing contrary to the doctrine of the confession of his own particular church? If he has not, has it not struck him with surprize, that so many men should have arisen, in different parts of *Europe*, for two hundred years successively, with intellects so exactly fitted to their respective confessions, as if both had been shaped together, like the coat and the lining, by the same stroke of the shears? But if he has heard (as who has not?) of *Dissentients* among the governors of Protestant Churches, and those in no small numbers, was it fair in him to build so much upon the contrary supposition?

But I can forgive the learned Professor any thing, even this spice of controversial artifice, in consideration of his sending his readers to Mr. *Locke's* first Letter on *Toleration*, and to the Dedication to Pope *Clement XI.* prefixed to Sir *Richard Steele's* Account of the *State of the Roman*

**Roman Catholic Religion**, in all parts of the world. Whoever reads those two excellent tracts, with attention and understanding, will never be the worse for reading this *Vindication*.

## PREFACE



Human Capital, in all parts of the world. Whoever reads those two excellent tracts, with attention and understanding, will never be the worse for reading this *Vindication*.

## PREFACE

---

# P R E F A C E

TO THE

## F I R S T E D I T I O N.

**T**HE author of the following performance, freely confesses himself to be one of those, who, in common with an eminent prelate, "have been seized with that epide-  
" mical malady of *idle* and *visionary* men, THE  
" PROJECTING TO REFORM THE PUBLIC <sup>a</sup>." Nor would he have any reason to be ashamed of classing with so conspicuous a character, were it not that he hath unhappily taken an antipathy to that course of medicine, to which so many others of the fraternity owe the recovery of their *health* and *senses*. He is still, alas! labouring to bring his project to bear, even when all the world about him is exclaiming at the folly of every one who is engaged in so desperate an enterprize.

The honest truth is, he thinks the remedy worse than the disease; having seldom observed any one of these patients perfectly cured, but by

<sup>a</sup> See, The *first* Dedication prefixed to the second volume of *The Divine Legation of Moses*, &c. published 1758. p. 5.

the application of a *charm*, which usually operates in the other extreme; and, in the shape of *political spectacles*, represents the public as *too good to need reformation*; a sort of *vision* which, of course, ends in a perfect conformity to the principles and manners in fashion, and not seldom puts the *restored fanatic* in a hopeful way of recovering with advantage, whatever he was in danger of losing, by persisting in his former *rêverie*.

Our sage advisers will, no doubt, suggest, that there is a middle way between the two extremes; and that a man of prudence and probity, having tried his talent at reforming without success, may well sit down contented, enjoy his own opinion, and practise his own virtue in some corner, out of the way of temptation, and, for the rest, leave others, who are willing to take the public as they find it, to make their best of it.

To this sober counsel, I, for my own part, should have the less objection, could I be satisfied, that a *neutral* character in matters concerning public reformation, where talents are vouchsafed, though ever so sparingly, were to be justified; and particularly where, as in this country, every man may, within decent restrictions, *publish*, as well as *enjoy*, his own opinion.

There are certain provinces and stations, where, if the public really wants to be reformed, they who occupy them must be at some trouble in stifling their own convictions, before they can lie



lie down *peaceably* in the repose of a *neutrality*. To many of these provinces belong considerable degrees of influence and authority, sufficient to give weight and success to seasonable and spirited remonstrances. And they who are in the lowest stations of watchmen and labourers, may bear their testimony, perhaps with more advantage than may be apprehended by those, who consider not, from whom we are to look for the *increase* of what is *planted* or *watered* by any hand. And wherever the obligation exists, I should think it can hardly be removed out of view, without opening the prospect of some discomfort, at that awful period when every man's final account shall be called for.

But, indeed, indolent *neutrality* is not a common, and hardly a possible, effect of the cure performed upon *idle* and *visionary* reformers of the public. *Idleness*, in the proper sense of the term, is not their failing. They are commonly persons of active and lively spirits, who are not easy under want of employment. Their inexperience leads them into sanguine hopes, that fame, honours, and rewards must crown their labours. It is inconceivable to them, that, where the public is so grossly and notoriously wrong, it should not acknowledge its obligations to those, who interest themselves to set it right, by the most substantial instances of its gratitude. And this is the *idle* part of the character, in the figurative sense.

But when the astonished visionary finds his mistake, and perceives that public error, of the most palpable kind, has its champions ready armed at all points, and prepared to dispute every inch of ground with him, — that nothing would be got by the unequal conflict but disgrace, contempt, and poverty; human nature, and an impatience to be figuring with eclat, commonly bring him over, without much hesitation, to the surer side; where he sets himself to act the part of a *true proselyte*, that is to say, to *reform backwards*, with a violence and precipitation proportioned to the suspicions his new allies might entertain of his hankering after his old deviations, should he not give the most spirited proofs of his effectual conversion.

Were not the subject of too serious a nature, (for the particulars above are to be understood of reformation and reformers of religious matters) and were not the *Dramatis personæ* of too solemn a cast to be exhibited in *Comedy*, one might give very diverting instances of this kind of frailty, in more than one of those who have not only affected, with a kind of philosophical grimace, to ridicule their own former conduct as *idle* and *visionary*, but also, to fill up the measure of their merit with their party, have been the forwardest to *expose*, *reprobate*, and, to the utmost of their good will, *persecute* those who persist in this epidemical folly.

The

The *persisters*, indeed, are but few; and no wonder. All their discouragements considered, they may be said, like *Abraham*, *against hope, to believe in hope*. In the first ranks of their adversaries appear those who enjoy plentiful emoluments from the *nature* and *construction* of the *establishment*, who are therefore concerned to defend every thing belonging to it, not because it is *true*, or *reasonable*, or *righteous* in itself, or with respect to the design of the *Gospel*, but because *it is established*. With litigants of this complexion, arguments drawn from reason, from scripture, from the most notorious facts, are of no force. When *particular* answers fail them, they have general ones at hand, which do their business effectually. Public authority, long possession, the concurrence of the majority, the danger to public peace from attempts to innovate, &c. &c. &c. have such a formidable appearance, even in the eyes of some of the warmest friends of Reformation, that they will often shudder at the temerity of their own champions, when they consider with whom, and with what they are to engage, and (such are the effects of this kind of intimidation) will suppress their own speculations, to avoid suspicions of being connected with a set of men, whom the nature and tenor of such answers go near to stigmatize with something more heinous, than faction and sedition.

—noe the Bull upon the subject of the  
 —the first, that I have received and con-  
 sidered."



The whole case is set forth by Mr. *Bayle* in so masterly a manner, that I cannot resist the temptation of giving a pretty long extract from him, without any fear however of disgusting the sensible reader with the prolixity of it, for which the justness of that great man's sentiments upon so interesting a subject, will make him ample amends, as well as furnish me with some reflections arising from the case as stated by *Bayle*, compared with the conduct of the anti-reformers in our own country.

*John de Launoi*, a *Parisian* doctor of the *Sorbonne*, having, in the course of his learned disquisitions, found out the falsehood of many legends and traditions concerning the saints who were honoured with places in the popish calendars, made no scruple to publish his discoveries, and, in consequence of them, to propose, that these imaginary beings might be expunged from those Calendars, Martyrologies, &c. as occasioning an highly criminal superstition in those who paid religious adoration to them. He even ventured to attack the angelic doctor *Aquinas*, as chargeable with great ignorance, or great insincerity, in building his arguments against heterodoxy upon fabulous traditions.

One *Baron*, a Jacobine friar, undertook the defence of *Aquinas*, maintaining, that "the traditions he built upon had been derived from primitive times; that *Launoi's* researches and conclusions

" clusions were the employment of a pragmat-  
 " genius, more concerned to obtain a great than  
 " a good name; that *Launoi* ought, like *St. Tho-*  
 " *mas*, to have let things alone when they were  
 " well; and that, admitting some of these tradi-  
 " tions were of doubtful authority, or even fabu-  
 " lous, *Launoi* should have paid a proper regard  
 " to that maxim of the physicians, *Malum bene*  
 " *positum ne moveto.*" Which, being transferred  
 into divinity, signifies, that, *false traditions, which*  
*do not hurt faith, and promote piety, ought to be*  
*retained, and not disturbed.* Upon which Mr.  
*Bayle* thus reasons:

" If all the circumstances set forth by this *Ja-*  
 " *cobine* were true, there is no doubt but *John*  
 " *de Launoi* was deservedly condemned, as one  
 " who, to make himself talked of, and to satisfy  
 " his ill nature, would oppose many general opi-  
 " nions, which had obtained time out of mind; to  
 " the advancement of piety, without detriment to  
 " the faith, ———

" But this is not the case of our *Sor-*  
 " *bonne* doctor. The traditions he opposes have  
 " no good title, and his arguments against them  
 " are unanswerable. Now, in this case, it is  
 " plain, there is all the right in the world to bring  
 " the most general and ancient opinions to a trial,  
 " especially when their falsity keeps up a criminal  
 " devotion.

b 4

"I desire

“ I desire it may be observed, that the reason-  
 “ ings of this doctor were of such force, as to  
 “ undeceive abundance of people; but yet the  
 “ abuses have not been removed: Things remain  
 “ upon the same foot in *Provence*\*, and elsewhere.  
 “ They tell you still the same stories they told  
 “ your ancestors, and you see the same worship  
 “ and the same ceremonies. This proves the  
 “ difference there is betwixt private persons and  
 “ the public. Particular people are most of them,  
 “ one time or other, undeceived; and yet the  
 “ practice of the public remains the same.”

After which Mr. *Bayle* brings some parallel  
 instances from *Cicero*, and *Juvenal*, to shew, that  
 public institutions in the *Roman* state, kept their  
 ground against the conviction even of a majority.  
 And then goes on thus:

“ There is no likelihood that they who follow  
 “ the steps of *John de Launoi*, can do any service,  
 “ whilst things are only carried on by way of li-  
 “ terary dispute. The patrons of false devotion  
 “ will never recede. They find their account  
 “ too much in not bating an ace, and they are  
 “ powerful enough to secure themselves from  
 “ any violence. The court of Rome will second  
 “ and support them. The *Romish* church seems  
 “ to have adopted the religion of the god TERMI-  
 “ NUS of the *Roman* republic. This god never

\* Where a fictitious *Mary Magdalen* is worshiped as the con-  
 verter of the country.

“ yielded



“ yielded a tittle, no not to *Jupiter* himself; which  
“ was a sign, said they, that the Roman people  
“ should never recede, nor yield an inch of ground  
“ to their enemies. If any Pope should be will-  
“ ing to sacrifice something to the reunion of the  
“ schismatics, some insignificant devotions, some  
“ superannuated traditions, he might apprehend  
“ as great a murmur against him, as the Heathens  
“ made against the scandalous peace of the em-  
“ peror *Jovian*.”

He then proceeds to give some modern instances of the bad success of Reformers. — Of the Jesuit *Papebroch*, and his assistants, “ who attempted to purge the *Acta Sanctorum* of many  
“ fabulous and scandalous particulars, for which  
“ service the *Carmelites* and other monks procured several volumes of the said *Acts*, so  
“ purged, to be burned by the Inquisition of *Toledo*.” — Of Father *Mabillon*, who “ having  
“ laid down some very good rules concerning the  
“ worship of some saints, and the judgment to be  
“ made of relics; — was answered, *Physician, heal thyself*; — reform first the worship paid in some  
“ houses of your order of *St. Benedict* to saints  
“ as dubious as any. He was likewise told of  
“ the injury he did the church, and the advantage he gave to Protestants.” — Lastly, of  
Mr. *Thiers*, who “ set up against false relics, —  
“ examined where the bodies of martyrs lay, —  
“ published some dissertations upon the *holy tear*  
“ of

"of *Vendôme*, and upon *St. Firmin*. All, says  
 "Mr. *Bayle*, was lost labour. The King's council  
 "suppressed his book about *St. Firmin*, as the  
 "bishop of *Amiens* had condemned a letter he had  
 "published upon the same question."

Mr. *Bayle's* concluding reflection is as follows.  
 "The fruits of a discreet zeal are destroyed  
 "in the bud. They build upon this principle,  
 "that it is dangerous to abrogate old customs;  
 "that boundaries ought not to be removed;  
 "and that, according to the old proverb, we  
 "should leave the *minster where we find it*. The  
 "prosperity of the Christian *Rome*, just like that  
 "of the Pagan *Rome*, is founded upon the pre-  
 "servation of ancient rites. Consecrations must  
 "be complied with; religion will allow no alter-  
 "ation in them, *sed illa mutari vetat religio, et*  
 "*consecratis utendum est*. In our days, said a sub-  
 "prior of *St. Anthony*, let us beware of innova-  
 "tions."

We see then how it is: How numerous,  
 how well disciplined the forces that are brought  
 into the field against *Reformers*; how able the  
 generals that head them, and how determined  
 the whole body not to yield an inch, even to  
 the united powers of piety, truth, and common  
 sense.

*Bayle's Dict. Art. LAUNOI (JOHN DE) Rem. E.*

But,

But, methinks, I hear a zealous anti-reformer, steady to his point, and not easily disconcerted, expostulating with me to the following effect:

"We see, indeed, from this representation of Mr. Bayle, *both it is*; but only, *how it is* in *popish* countries. Do not Protestant churches reprobate saint-worship of all sorts? Have we any such instances among us of gross idolatry, as that of worshipping an imaginary saint? And can you pretend, there are any errors or corruptions in the church of *England*, any thing like to have so ill an effect upon the people, as the shameful superstitions attacked by the *French* reformers above-mentioned? On another hand, is it fair to put the reformed churches, and particularly the church of *England*, which pretend to no infallibility, and which are founded upon principles of Christian liberty, upon the same footing of obstinacy with the church of *Rome*, the very genius and spirit of which excludes all examination, and all right of private judgment? And is it not upon record, that the church of *England* hath made alterations in her public forms, and doth she not declare that she is ready to make them again, upon just and weighty occasions?"

To the first part of this remonstrance I answer, that neither *Launoi*, *Papebroch*, *Mabillon*, nor *Thiers*, made the least question about the lawfulness of worshipping those whom they esteemed to

be



be *real* saints, or venerating what could be proved to be *true* relics. They saw not the least idolatry or superstition in either practice. And, it being presupposed by them, that saint-worship was both lawful and edifying, I apprehend, it would not be of much significance, with respect either to the piety or moral principles of the people, that they were under the delusion which these reformers endeavoured to remove. Mr. *Boyle*, indeed, calls it a *criminal* devotion; but, upon principles which he hath well explained elsewhere, it could not be criminal in the party who intended his worship to a *real* saint<sup>d</sup>. If a *French* papist was persuaded that his prayers to St. *Firmin* or St. *Rena-tus* were as properly directed as those he made to St. *Peter* or St. *Paul*, his inward spirit of devotion would be no less zealous and sincere in the one case than in the other; nor would the merit of it suffer any diminution on account of a mistake of which he was not, nor could be made sensible. And this is the circumstance which gives all its worth to Father *Baron*'s maxim, *Malum bene pos-  
tum ne moveto*.

The case, indeed, is different, when you ascend from the common people to their governors and directors, who were conscious of the delusion, and

<sup>d</sup> See his *Comment. Philosoph.* sur ces paroles de J. Christ, *Contrain les d'entrer*. Part II. chap. viii. where he undertakes to prove, que la conscience qui est dans l'erreur, a les mêmes que celle qui n'y est pas.

still kept it up, or who were capable judges of *Launoi's* reasonings, and refused to examine them. But even here it would be difficult, perhaps, to state the comparative guilt of popish and protestant rulers in the like circumstances, within their respective departments; and the whole (as it seems to me at least) would turn upon the true answer to this single question, Whether certain particulars, which are *equally* proved to want reformation among protestants, have not as ill an effect upon a protestant people, while they continue unreformed, as the mistake of a false saint for a true one, has upon a papist, who believes saint-worship to be an indispensable duty? I forbear to give instances, though there are more than one at hand.

With respect to the second member of the expostulation above, I would beg leave to observe, that Mr. *Bayle's* speculations are founded upon the nature and genius of religious establishments in general. Nor can the church of *England* take it amiss to be ranked with the church of *Rome*, nor the church of *Rome* to be ranked with a Pagan establishment, so far as the parallel *really* and *in fact* will hold. To me there does not appear one consideration which impeached the prudence, or obstructed the success, of *Launoi*, *Mabillon*, or *Thiers*, that would not operate equally to the disreputation and disappointment of an English Protestant Reformer. In all *exclusive* establishments, where

where temporal emoluments are annexed to the profession of a certain system of doctrines, and the usage of a certain *routine* of forms, and appropriated to an order of men so and so qualified, that order of men will naturally think themselves *interested* that things should continue as they are. A reformation might endanger their emoluments. For though it should only begin with such things as are most notoriously amiss, the alteration of which would no way affect their temporal interests, yet, by opening a door to farther inquiry (which would be the natural effect of it), their dignities and revenues might possibly be brought into question, and be thought to need some regulations, which it can hardly be supposed they would approve. So that they who ask, *Who knows where a reformation may end?* by way of giving a reason why it should not be begun, are certainly not *unwise in their generation*. A man of sense, though he may love his money better than any thing else, may, nevertheless, be capable of discerning the particulars where a reformation is wanted.

For the rest, the clergy of protestant establishments have been protected in their opposition to innovations by the higher powers, as well as *monks* and *augurs*. The commonalty in our own country, as far as ever I could see, are kept in their prejudices and adherence to their present forms, by the same considerations and ways of arguing that attach the vulgar in other countries



to things of a worse complexion \*. We have an example in the renowned *Tillotson*, what murmurs the presiding character in our church experienced, upon giving way to a reformation of our public forms and services, though in the least important particulars. The arguments against a reform, taken from *possession* and *antiquity*, and the expedience of adhering to ancient rites, have been as often and as warmly urged by some protestants in *England*, as by the orthodox in foreign lands. How dextrous we are at *retrimation*, the late Mr. *White's* Letters to a *Dissenting Gentleman* remain a memorable and standing evidence. Father *Mabillon* himself could not hear more of the advantage he gave to Protestants, than the authors of the *Free and candid Disquisitions* have been told of the countenance they gave to the English Protestant Dissenters †. And I am not certain

\* See Bishop *Beveridge's* Latin Sermon before the Convocation, 1689, and most of the Sermons at *Hutchins's* Lecture.

† "This book of yours [The Free and Candid Disquisitions] will be a means to lessen very much the credit and estimation of the church of *England* in the eyes of many of its members, as well as to confirm and encourage the Dissenters in their present ways, perhaps also to increase the number of them. — Your Disquisitions, doubtless, will be considered as a grand Arsenal, stored with ordinance of almost all sorts, fit to attack the church of *England*, which our adversaries, no doubt, will thank you for, and have recourse to, upon all occasions." *Free and impartial Considerations on the Free and Candid Disquisitions*, ascribed to Mr. *White*, p. 59, 60.

that

that he would be mistaken, who should affirm of the church of *England* (what *Luther* did of the church of *Rome* \*) that the remonstrances of these *Disquisitors* have rendered the church more firm and inflexible, even with respect to some particulars which seemed to be given up on all hands, till they were pointed out for reformation by these idle and visionary men.

To what the alterations that have been made in our ecclesiastical system amount, and consequently how far the church may be disposed to a further reformation upon just and weighty occasions, will be seen by and by.

Here is more than sufficient, one would think, to deter a reformer, who is able and deliberate enough to count the cost, from ever meddling with public error, even with more than half the courage of *Luther*. A man must be in a very uncommon situation, as well as of an uncommon spirit, even in this land of liberty, who is bold enough to undertake the patronage of a cause, to which so many, at different periods, have fallen martyrs. Not always, indeed, by fire and sword,

\* Verum concordiam fidei, seu doctrinæ, frustra quarit *Erasmus*, eo consilio ut mutuum cedamus et condonemus, non tantum quod adversarii prorsus nihil cedunt, nec cedere volunt, quin potius rigidius et obstinatius nunc omnia defendunt quam unquam antea, etiam talia ausi nunc exigere, quæ ante *Lutherum* ipsimet damnaverant, et reprobaverant. *Luther* apud *Seckendorf*, lib. iii. p. 53.

but oftener, perhaps, by what kills as surely, though not so quickly, hunger and nakedness.

For the misfortune is that the malady of reforming the public, is most apt to seize upon those, whose profession leads them to a more intimate study of the holy scriptures; whose views in life, and, ordinarily, whose scanty circumstances require, that they should preserve some credit with their ecclesiastical superiors, in order to procure themselves a decent maintenance. Nothing can be more fatal to such than a munious spirit of reformation. They are marked of course as *forbidden* and *contraband* men. A sprightly academic was one day making some free observations upon the Canons, before an eminent sage of the law: "Beware, young man," says the prudent counsellor, "of the *holy office*, and remember that "there are *starving*, as well as *burning* Inquisitions."

But, after all, they who can get above these alarming considerations, or who are in a situation not to be affected by them, will not be absolutely destitute of some gleams of hope and comfort, over and besides what results from the inward testimony of having done their duty.

Mr. Boyle, as the reader hath seen, observed, that "the reasonings of Dr. Launoi had force "enough to convince abundance of people," and those of course, people of the best sense, and the most rational piety. So, no doubt, hath it hap-

pened



opened to the pleaders for a farther reformation in our own church, many of whom have been not a whit behind the *Sorbonne* doctor, either in the evidence of facts, or in the force of their reasoning. Nor is it unreasonable to presume, that, as farther developments are made, the number of the *convinced* must be increased.

The weakness of the few answers that have been made to the important remonstrances of serious and judicious men on the article of a farther reformation, and the supercilious contempt with which the most respectful, as well as the most reasonable of them have been passed by, must detract something from the estimation of those whom the thinking part of mankind will suppose to be chiefly concerned to take notice of them. It will look like a combination to adhere to the established system, for some *political* purposes not fit to be owned; while no sollicitude is perceived to relieve the reasonable scruples of conscientious dissenters, or to consult the real necessities of our own people, by substituting, in the room of hackneyed, and not always justifiable forms, more intelligible, as well as more animating methods of public worship, and public edification.

To be plainer still, this temper and conduct in a set of men, many of whom make it appear, on other occasions, that they want neither learning nor capacity to form an accurate judgment on so interesting a case, will hardly allow us to think them

them in earnest in their weekly exhortations to christian piety and virtue, or the zeal they occasionally express for the protestant religion and government. Their doctrine, contrasted by their practice, will look to the discerning part of the public, as if nothing was meant by these terms, in *their* mouths, but mere conformity to an ecclesiastical establishment, and a resolution to support and defend that at all events, with, or without, reason.

But, if ever the mask should fall off in some future skirmish<sup>a</sup> (the probable and frequent effect of a rivalry for temporal honours and emoluments), and one of the parties should be reduced to the necessity of leaning upon the friends of reformation, by way of balance to the other, it is then that the labours of these *idle and visionary* men may come to have their weight, and some of

<sup>a</sup> This was once very near being the case, when, in the memorable year 1745, two of our leading churchmen could not agree, whether, upon the received system of divinity, the *Rebellion* then on foot, was to be considered as a judgment upon the *state*, or only upon *particulars*. The difference, however, was happily compromised in the following manner. — “ In the mean time, most polemic Sir, let us agree in this, however different we may go in other matters, TO REVERENCE AND SUPPORT OUR HAPPY CONSTITUTION. And, that I may bring the matter as near to you [*might be not have added*, and to myself,] as I can, what *other* constitution but this, let me ask you, would have heaped *Chancellorships*, *Archdeaconries*, *Prebends*, &c. with so liberal a hand, and on so worthy a subject ?” — This was an argument *ad utrumque*, which would admit of no demur; and so, we may suppose, they shook hands, and parted friends.

those, at least, who are now pining away in a desponding obscurity, under the frowns of their disobliged superiors, may possibly live to see the way they have been preparing, gradually opening to the accomplishment of what all well-informed christians and consistent Protestants have been so long and so ardently wishing for in vain.

But let this happen when it will, the church will not get half so much credit by a reformation into which she is compelled by an unwelcome necessity, as would attend her undertaking it freely and of her own bounty; and there is one consideration above all others, in which her honour is intimately concerned, that should dispose her to think of it seriously.

It is an objection which, by turns, has been made to all the reformed establishments in *Europe*, that their respective plans are too narrow and circumscribed; nor is it to be denied, that, along with all their professions of asserting christian liberty, they have, more or less, imposed upon their members, certain doctrines and modes of worship, for which they have no other than human authority.

When this is objected to any of them, as inconsistent with their original foundation, the holy scriptures, they constantly appeal to the practice of each other, as a common justification of them all; as if that were sufficient to preclude all appeals to any other authority.

The



The learned and excellent Dr. Mosheim hath complimented the church of *England* with the title of, *The chief and leading branch of that great community, which goes under the denomination of the REFORMED CHURCH*<sup>1</sup>. What prescriptive or equitable right the church of *England* has to this preference, I shall not stay to enquire. It is sufficient for my purpose that she accepts the compliment, having, indeed, paid it to herself an hundred times<sup>k</sup>. And yet, when her own un-

<sup>1</sup> See his *Compendious View of Ecclesiastical History*, translated by Dr. Archibald Maclaine, lately published for Millar, vol. ii. p. 375. — a work, for which the *christian*, as well as the *literary* commonwealth is highly obliged both to the author and translator; as it is calculated to correct, with a very singular impartiality, though, at the same time, with great candour and tenderness, the false and delusive views in which the religious conduct of our forefathers has been placed, both with respect to facts and systems.

<sup>k</sup> "We think," says a learned Bishop, "our own church the best; every body thinks it far from the worst," — "The *Lutherans*," says another (if another), "prefer it to the *Calvinist* communion, the *Calvinists* to the *Lutheran*, and the *Greeks* to both." — Which is explained to mean, that every one thinks the church of *England* the next best to his own. "But this," says Dr. Mayhew, "is said without proof." *Second Defence*, p. 6. — And mark what a *bitter pill* the Doctor gives us in the room of this *sweetmeat*, with which we treat ourselves. "There is indeed," says he, "one church, a very ancient and extensive one, which it may naturally be concluded, for a reason that shall be nameless, considers the communion of the church of *England* the next best to her own." *Observ.* p. 127. For my part, I should think we are well off, if, for this *nameless* reason, all other Protestants do not think our church the *worst* but one.

scriptural impositions come to be objected to her, she hath the condescension to alledge in her defence, the usages of protestant churches abroad; nay, hath sometimes been humble enough to take shelter under the dissenting churches at home,—those very assemblies, which, on other occasions, she hath refused to acknowledge as sister-churches; a degree of humility, in my poor opinion, much below the dignity of a *leading* church, which surely should maintain her ground, and vindicate her practice by *original* authority, without accepting any supplemental aid from the examples of those, whom, in every other light, she looks upon as something less than her inferiors.

But, would the church of *England*, indeed, perfectly atchieve this honour of being the leader and chief of all reformed churches? The way is open. Let her be the *first* to remove every stumbling-block out of the way of her weak (if so she will needs call them) but conscientious fellow-christians. Let her nobly and generously abolish and disavow, all impositions, all bonds, and yokes, all beggarly elements, disagreeable to the spirit and design of christianity. Let her remove all grounds of suspicion of her hankering after *Romish* superstition, by renouncing every rite, ordinance, and ceremony, which may nourish this jealousy among the Dissenters, and for which she is driven to make apologies, that so remarkably contrast her pretensions to an authority to  
decree

decree them. Let her do this, and set the glorious example to the other Protestant churches of *Europe*, and then will she be justly entitled to those encomiums, which, while she assumes them in her present situation, will only pass with the judicious for the meanest of all mean things, *self-adulation*.

But to wave our speculations for the present, and to come to a few plain facts. Let us take a cursory view of the steps taken, by authority, to reform the church of *England*, after the settlement of it by Queen *Elizabeth's* Act of Uniformity.

*Elizabeth* would enter into no treaty with the old puritans to alter or reform any thing. They were delivered over to *Parker* and *Whitgift*, for correction only; which the latter exercised with so unfeeling a hand, and so far beyond his legal powers, that, upon the Queen's demise, he began to be terribly frightened at the approach of King *James's* first parliament; and it is probable enough his apprehensions hastened his death.

He lived, however, to be present at the *Hampton-Court* conference, where all objections were happily silenced by the commodious maxim of, *No bishop, no king*. The whole affair ended with extravagant compliments to the royal moderator, which some people, who were not puritans, thought christian bishops should not have carried so far.



Barlow's account of it might well enough have been called, *A Farce of three Acts*, as it was played by his Majesty's servants at Hampton-Court, &c. But it proved to be no farce to the poor conscientious puritans, with whom James faithfully kept his promise, viz. that, "if they" would not conform, he would *harry them out of the land, and even do worse*<sup>1</sup>. Accordingly many of these worthy confessors found it more eligible to quit their country, and to seek their peace in an uncultivated desert, than abide the fury of the bishops. And when they, who first fled to *New England*, had made this a comfortable asylum, the authority of government was most cruelly interposed, to deprive those, who would have followed their brethren, of this relief, that the bishops might not lose the satisfaction of tormenting them at home<sup>m</sup>. And afterwards, when, in the reign of *Charles I.*, these refugees began to be happy and prosperous, the malicious *Laud*, that they might reap no advantages from their industry, commercial genius, and christian liberty, contrived to cramp their trade by foolish proclamations<sup>n</sup>, and, to complete their mortifica-

<sup>1</sup> Fuller's Church Hist. B. x. p. 19. and Heylin's History of the Presbyterians, B. xi. p. 376.

<sup>m</sup> See Pierce's Vindication, Part I. p. 170, 171. Tindal's Rapin, 8vo. 1731, vol. IX. p. 312—395. Maccauley, vol. I. p. 67. But above all, Wilson, p. 74.

<sup>n</sup> Rusloworth, second part, p. 718.

tion,

tion, was upon the point of sending them a Bishop with a military force to back his authority, if the Scots had not found him other business.

Fuller tells us, humourously enough, that, after the Hampton-Court conference, "many cripples in conformity were cured of their halting therein, and such who knew not *their own*, till they knew the King's mind in this matter, for the future quietly digested the ceremonies of the church."

It is more than probable, that James himself was one of these *cripples*, till he talked with his bishops; the time had been, when he could no more digest these ceremonies, than his new puritan subjects, and when he talked against those of the church of England, in particular, with scorn and contempt.

No doubt, but, upon the event of this conference there was a considerable *falling off*. So it will always be in such cases, even with those who know *their own minds* well enough. Bancroft pretended to Spotswood, Archbishop of St. Andrews, that "when the rolls were called of those who stood out, and were deposed, which was some years after, they were found to be *forty-nine* in

\* Heylin's Life of Laud, p. 369.

† Fuller's Church History, B. x. p. 21.

‡ He called the English Liturgy, "an evil said mass in English; which wanted nothing of the mass but the listings." Calderwood, apud Harris, p. 25.

"all England, whereas the ministers in that  
"kingdom are reckoned nine thousand and  
"above."

*Bancroft* probably forgot to tell his brother *Spotswood*, how many shiploads he had terrified into the plantations. It might be too, that he found no more than *forty-nine*, whom he held it *safe* to persecute; poor, friendless, and moneyless men, who had nothing wherewithal to buy off their censures, nor any patrons to protect them. There are authentic accounts, that the Nonconformist ministers were not so thin sown even in *Bancroft's* reign.

But perhaps a little anecdote, preserved by a sensible and candid conformist, may help us to account for this gross misrepresentation. "In the year 1669, says he, we had several articles sent down to the clergy, with private orders to some, to make the conventiclers as few and inconsiderable as might be. The eighth and last was this, *Whether you do think they might be easily suppressed by the assistance of the civil magistrate?*"

This was a cast of *Sheldon's* politics, the system of which he took from those excellent originals,

<sup>1</sup> *Spotswood's* Hist. of the Church of Scotland, p. 479. and *Heylin's* Hist. of the Presbyt. p. 376. *Calderwood* says, that the number of silenced, and deprived ministers, on that occasion, were 300. *Altare Dagnascenum* Præfat,

<sup>2</sup> Conformists plea for Nonconformists, Part I. p. 40.

*Bancroft*



*Bancroft* and *Laud*. It would not have looked well to the *civil magistrate* to do the *Hierarchical drudgery* of the prelates, while the nonconformists were esteemed considerable for their numbers and quality. Even *Charles's* ministers might have boggled at this.

But *Spotswood's* reflection upon *Bancroft's* report, must not be forgot. "Such a noise, says he, will a few disturbers make, in any society where they are tolerated." Experience hath shewn, that the more such disturbers are *tolerated*, the less noise they make. But *Spotswood*, by the word *tolerated*, meant, *suffered to live*. Nothing like a halter to make a man cease his noise!

What the puritans aimed at, and hoped to obtain by this conference, may be seen in that excellent rescript called the *millenary petition*, preserved by *Fuller* (no bad model for a reformation even in these days); what they did obtain, was imprisonment, deposition, and exile.

The violence with which the ruling bishops drove on during this and the first part of the succeeding reign, (over which a good natured man would throw a cloak, if he could find one large enough to cover it) lost them first their seats in parliament, and afterwards their whole episcopal authority.

Of those great and wise men who composed the parliament of 1641, (and greater, or wiser, or  
more

more of them at one time, *England* never saw) all were not of one mind, with respect to the bishops.

Some thought that particular delinquents being punished for examples, the order might remain, with such limitations, as would prevent its being mischievous for the time to come.

With this view, archbishop *Usher* drew up his plan of *the reduction of Episcopacy*; and would the bishops have contented themselves with the powers reserved to them in that plan, some have supposed they might have saved themselves, and very probably the king.

But they were wiser. They supposed the king was interested in their preservation, and that if ever the crown should recover the prerogative claimed by *James I.* and *Charles I.* episcopacy must rise again with that, in all its pomp and lustre, and in a condition to bring all those who had or should oppose it, to effectual repentance; and in this, such of the bishops as lived to the year 1662, found they had not been mistaken.

This may be called the second attempt to reform the church of *England*. Whether it mis-

“But *Cromwell* subdued his country when this spirit [of Liberty] was at its height, by a successful struggle against court-oppression, and while it was conducted and supported by a set of the greatest geniuses for government the world ever saw embarked together in one common cause.” Notes upon *Pope's Essay on man*, edit. 1743, quarto, p. 103.

carried

carried for having in it too much, or too little episcopacy, would be hard to say.

The *third* was the *Savoy* conference 1661. *Charles II.* impatient to accomplish his restoration, and having some misgivings, suggested probably by Lord *Clarendon*, that the anti-episcopal party might still be strong enough to give him much uneasiness, published a declaration at *Breda*, giving the presbyterians to understand two things, which were never intended to be carried into execution, but upon the extremest compulsion. 1. A quite new model of the church of *England*. 2. Where this should fall short of satisfying tender consciences, all possible ease and relief, by a large and comprehensive toleration.

*Charles* soon found that the dissenters were in no condition to molest him. Nevertheless, as the royal word was given *twice over*, some shew must be made of keeping it. And this produced the *Savoy* conference so called; a complication of sophistry, hypocrisy, and virulence on the part of the orthodox, hardly to be paralleled in popish history.

*Clarendon*, *Sheldon*, and *Morley* were the conductors of the *Drama*, the two latter true sons of *Baneroft* and *Laud*. *Clarendon* passes with many for a man of integrity, seduced, in this instance, partly by his own prejudices, partly by the artifices of the bishops.

Bishop



Bishop Burnet puts the inflexibility of *Clarendon* towards the nonconformists, to the account of his gratitude to the bishops, for the services they did him in the affair of his daughter's marriage with the duke of York<sup>u</sup>. If this was the case, and if *Clarendon* was otherwise inclined to moderate and healing measures, more shame for the bishops who required such a requital.

But upon the supposition, that Lord *Clarendon* had really the least inclination to relax the terms of conformity in favour of the dissenters, he must have been the most disingenuous man that ever lived. For in the posthumous history of his Life, published 1759, he lays it down for a maxim, that, "nothing but the severest execution of the law, can ever prevail upon that class of men, to conform to government." What could a vindictive prelate of those times have said more?

Be it here noted that Lord *Clarendon* wrote this account of his own Life at *Montpelier*, when he could have no temptation to dissemble. Did he then *always* think so highly of established ecclesiastical forms, as this maxim imports? Certainly not, if we may judge from two of his essays, written likewise at *Montpelier*, the one, *On the regard due to antiquity*, the other, *On multiplying controversies*. However, if any one chuses to add his Lordship to the examples in the last chapter

\* Hist. O. T. vol. I. p. 260.

of this work, of great churchmen labouring under *invincible prejudices*, I have no objection.

*Clarendon's* removal from the helm made way for a *fourth* attempt to reform the church of *England*, in the year 1668, in which the undertakers on the side of the church were sincere and hearty. These undertakers were, judge *Hale*, bishop *Wilkins*, Dr. *Tillotson*, and a few more, with the countenance of the lord keeper *Bridgman*. Names, one may venture to say, sufficient to recommend a plan of reformation, to any christian government.

"But, says *Burnet*, what advantage soever the  
"men of comprehension might have in any other  
"respect, the majority of the house of commons  
"was so possessed against them, that when it was  
"known in a succeeding session, that a bill was  
"ready to be offered to the house for that end,  
" [*drawn by* lord chief justice *Hale*] a very ex-  
"traordinary vote passed, that no bill to that  
"purpose, should be received."

How the house of commons came to be so *pos-  
sessed*, or perhaps, how it came to be known, that  
such a bill was prepared, is fairly accounted for  
by the following anecdote.

"Bishop *Wilkins*, who was a candid, ingenu-  
"ous, and open-hearted man, acquainting bishop  
"*Ward* [*SETH* lord bishop of *Salisbury*] with  
"the whole matter, hoping to have met with  
"his concurrence in it, he [*Ward*] so bestirred

"Hist. O. T. vol. I. p. 260.

himself

"himself, and all his friends, and made such a party that nothing could be done in it \*."

This same bishop *Ward*, "to get his former errors to be forgot (for he had complied during the late times, and held in, by taking the covenant) went into the high notions of a severe conformity, and became the most considerable man upon the bench."

To finish his character. "He was so far incensed with some things contained in the first part of [the learned and truly antipapistical] *Dr. Daniel Whitby's Protestant Reconciler*, that he obliged him to make a retraction." Which, if I had room, I would add in the margin, just as it was imposed by this steady, *holding-in* bishop, as it may serve for a precedent, in case retractions should once more come into fashion. I cannot forbear, however, putting down two of the obnoxious propositions retracted<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Calamy's Abridgment*, p. 322.

<sup>1</sup> *Barnet*, u. f. 192.

<sup>1</sup> 1. It is not lawful for superiors to impose any thing in the worship of God, that is not antecedently necessary.

2. The duty of not offending a weak brother is inconsistent with all human authority of making laws concerning indifferent things. Qu. Are these propositions orthodox, upon the principles of the ALLIANCE, or are they not? See, *A short Account of Dr. Whitby*, p. 6.

But the worthy Doctor lived to see better times, and another sort of a bishop in that see; and in a sermon upon *Matth. xii. 7*: intitled, *Ritual Observations to give place to charity* (published in 1720 with ten more, and dedicated to Bishop *Hoadley*) may be said in effect to have retracted these retractions. *Dr. Whitby* found himself obliged to change his opinions on some other



Some faint attempts towards an accommodation with the protestant dissenters, by abating in the terms of conformity, were afterwards made during the reign of *Charles II.* particularly in the years 1673 and 1674. Popery was then making so formidable a progress, that even *Morley* and *Ward* were frightened into an appearance, at least, of desiring to make room for the nonconformists in the church, as an accession of strength against the common enemy. *Calamy*, in his Abridgment of *Baxter's* history, hath given some particulars, and a sketch of abatements drawn up by *Baxter*, at the desire of Lord *Orrery*, in the year 1673 \*.

*Morley's* character is highly painted. "The bishop of *Winchester*, that it might not seem to be for nothing that he oft pretended to be of so peaceable a disposition, furthered an act only to take off the assent and consent, [to the book of Common prayer] and the renunciation of the covenant. But when other bishops were against even this shew of abatement, he told them openly in the house [of lords], that, had it been but to abate them a ceremony, he would not have spoken in it. But he knew they [the dissenters] were bound to the same things still by subjects, whereof an account was given to the public in a little piece intituled, *Dr. Whithy's Last Thoughts*, with a candour and sincerity, of which it is much to be regretted that we have not more examples.

\* From p. 338. to 343.

d

" other.

"other clauses or obligations, if these were repealed."

\* Ibid. p. 340. *Morley*, upon some occasions, affected great candour and moderation towards scrupulous Nonconformists. He told one of them (*Mr. Samuel Sprint*) that "he must not philosophize upon the words, *assent* and *consent*; nor suppose that the parliament did by *assent* mean an act of the understanding, and by *consent* an act of the will: for no more was intended, than that the person so declaring, intended to read the book;" adding, that "if he (*Sprint*) would make the declaration in the words of the Act of Uniformity, and then say that thereby he meant no more than that he would read the *Common-Prayer*, he would admit him into a living." *Calamy's Account*, &c. p. 341. They who drew up the Act of Uniformity, 14 Car. II. would hardly have acquiesced in this *unphilosophical* doctrine. In the year 1663 an attempt was made for a declaratory law to explain the declaration of *assent* and *consent* enjoined by the Act of Uniformity, to the same effect with this explanation of *Bishop Morley*; but was rejected with indignation, as an alteration wherein was neither *justice* nor *prudence*. *Calamy's Abridgment of Baxter's Life*, p. 205. *Mr. Obbitt*, and the late *Bishop Hoadley* were of the same mind with *Bishop Morley*. And though, perhaps, the bishops of the present day would ask no questions of a candidate, how he understands the *assent* nor *consent* which he is required to declare, yet, I dare say, they would not allow him to explain his declaration in *Bishop Morley's* sense in so many words. Nor, indeed, do I think that a declaration limited by such an explanation, would be *legal*. This, however, is an instance of what has often been supposed, that the greatest sticklers for conformity have been self-convicted that the forms by which it is enforced are *indefensible*. Such men as *Morley* could not but know, that, if the parliament had meant any thing but what they plainly expressed, they might have found words fit for their purpose, without leaving others to find out meanings, which every man of common sense sees their words will not bear.

This is so black and infamous, that I should hardly blame a *zealous churchman*, who should demur to the competency of the evidence, as coming from a dissenter. There it hath stood however, for above fifty years, uncontradicted, as far as I know, by any one.

There is a letter of Dr. *Tillotson*, not far from this passage, in *Calamy's Abridgment*, by which it appears that *Ward* had played *him* much the same trick in 1675 that he had played *Wilkins* in 1668, only, perhaps, with a little more hypocrisy. *Tillotson* there says, that "the projected bill cannot pass in either house, without the concurrence of a considerable part of the *bishops*, and the countenance of his majesty, which, at present, I see little reason to expect."

The reason why these two bishops, *Morley* and *Ward*, pretended to be so often for accommodation, seems to have been, to prevent any meetings being held without their knowledge, and consequently a reformation from coming upon them by surprize. No doubt but *Ward* kept in mind, not without some degree of horror, how narrowly *Bel and the dragon* had escaped an ambuscade by the freedom and openness of honest bishop *Wilkins*.

The next attempt to reform the church of *England*, had not only the concurrence of some worthy bishops who did real honour to their or-

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. p. 343.



der, and of a number of pious and learned divines in inferior stations; but was undertaken under the auspicious authority of *William III.* in the year 1689.

By a fatal mistake, it was agreed, that the matter should pass through the forms of convocation, where it met with an effectual defeat from the zeal and activity of a faction in the lower house, led on indeed, as was suspected, by some of the bench, particularly *Mew* and *Sprat*.

*Dr. Birch* brings some authentic proofs of bishop *Compton's* intriguing to have *Dr. Jane* chosen *prolocutor*, in preference to *Tillotson*, not out of a disaffection to the cause, but to the man. But he who could put the cause in so fair a way of being ruined to gratify his own personal resentment, could not be very cordial to it at the bottom.

One single circumstance will serve to characterize the spirit and piety of these convocation men.

"We, say they, being the representatives of a *formed* established church, do not think fit to mention the word RELIGION, any further than "it is the religion of some formed established church."

The word for *religion* in the Greek testament, is *θρησκεία*, which is no where appropriated to a formed established church. *Paul* speaks of *sects*

\* *Life of Tillotson*, p. 179.

in

In the Jewish religion <sup>d</sup>, some of which were just as much *establisbed*, as the presbyterians and quakers are in England. James defines *pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father*, in terms which shew, that such religion may be practised and conformed to, where there neither is, nor ever was, an established church <sup>e</sup>. But this sort of religion the pious convocation-men *did not think fit to mention*.

Their notion of religion, indeed, hath rather a pagan cast. *Religionem eam, quæ in METU et CEREMONIA Deorum fit, appellant*, says Cicero <sup>f</sup>. But another pagan seems to have had a more evangelical idea of religion. *Religiosus, est non modo deorum sanctitatem magni æstimans, sed etiam officiosus adversus homines* <sup>g</sup>.

One cannot well call the *Free and Candid Disquisitions*, relating to the church of England, or the excellent *Appeals* which followed them, by the name of attempts to *reform* the church. These were rather attempts to feel the pulses of the ruling ecclesiastics of that time. So, however, matters were managed at that period, that neither the authors nor the public were the wiser for those attempts. An ingenious fencer was employed on this occasion, to parry the home thrusts of these reformers, who had the dexte-

<sup>d</sup> Acts xxvi. 5.

<sup>e</sup> James i. 27.

<sup>f</sup> De Inventione, ii. 22.

<sup>g</sup> Festus in verbo, Religiosus.

rity to handle his weapons so, as to appear in the eyes of the spectators, to part at least on equal terms with his antagonists.

Here then hath TERMINUS fixed his pedestal, and here hath he kept his station for two whole centuries. We are just where the Acts of Uniformity left us, and where, for ought that appears in the temper of the times, the last trumpet will find us, — if POPERY will please to let us be quiet, and leave us to our repose with the same complaisance, that we have left *her bishops to go about here, and exercise every part of their functions without offence, and without observation*<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> In the former edition, the last part of the paragraph stood thus, — “if POPERY will please to let us be quiet, and leave us to our repose with the same complaisance, that we have left her to go about and perform all her functions, without offence, and without observation.” Soon after the *Confessional* was published, a packet, directed to the Author, was received through the Printer's hands, containing a pamphlet intituled, *A Review of Dr. Mayhew's Remarks on the Answer to his Observations on the conduct of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in foreign Parts, by East Apthorp, M. A. printed for J. Rivington.* With this pamphlet was conveyed an anonymous ticket in these words, “The Author of the *Confessional* is desired to read p. 10, 11, 12, of the inclosed pamphlet, and then to consider seriously, whether he hath given, in p. 36, 37, of his preface, a just representation of the words there quoted.” — Upon looking into the preface, the Author of the *Confessional* could find no words quoted at p. xxxvi. which had the least relation to any part of the controversy carried on

Having



Having now given a short series of instances of the church of *England's* disposition to reform

with the late Dr. *Mayhew*, concerning the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, &c. By the *ingenious sencer* there mentioned, the Author meant the late Mr. *White*, who was said to have animadverted on the *Free and Candid Disquisitions*, in a performance quoted above. If any gentleman now living is conscious that the term *ingenious sencer* might be applied to himself, upon account of his *parrying the thrusts* of the said *Disquisitions*, the Author of the *Confessional* declares he knows no such gentleman, and therefore is not accountable for any offence taken at that expression. In the xxxviii page of the former edition are indeed the words set down in the beginning of this note, *alluding to* rather than *quoting* the passage in question. However, to be ingenuous, the Author of the *Confessional* acknowledges that he had some words in the *Answer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations*, p. 66. then in his mind, and he now begs leave to consider how far his manner of referring to them may be called a *misrepresentation*. Upon inspecting Mr. *Apthorp's* pamphlet, the supposed misrepresentation, it is conjectured, consists in this, *viz.* that *Papery* is put for *Papish Bishops*, and *all her functions*, for *every part of their function*. But the Prefacer thinks, that *wherever* *Papish* bishops are permitted to exercise *every part of their function without offence and without observation*, it is a very reasonable presumption that *there every function of Papery* is performed with as little resentment or interruption: and among the rest, (if that may be called a function of *Papery*) the making of proselytes. Not so, says Mr. *Apthorp*, "The *Answerer* evidently means every part of their *peculiar function* as bishops; confirming the youth, ordaining and visiting the clergy of their own communion: for his argument led him to speak of nothing else. — Proselytes are chiefly made by their priests; and many cannot be made by so few bishops as they have here," p. 10, 11. — What authority Mr. *Apthorp*

the exceptionable parts of her constitution, I hope I may be indulged in a few remarks upon it.

had to interpret the words of Dr. Mayhew's *Answer* in this manner he knows best. But the *Preface* is of opinion, that the *Answerer* himself (who indeed appears, by his pamphlet, to be a much abler writer than Mr. Apsborp) would hardly have been so weak as to have explained himself in this sort. For, in the first place, to say as Mr. Apsborp does, that profelytes are chiefly made by Popish priests, is to allow that profelytes are *not* made by priests *only*; and to say that *many* profelytes cannot be made by so *few* bishops as the Papists have here, is to admit that *some* may be made by these bishops in proportion to their numbers; nor is any thing advanced by Mr. Apsborp to shew that making profelytes is more the *peculiar* business of priests than of bishops. If making profelytes is the duty of priests, it is the duty of bishops to see that it is discharged; to make this an article of inquiry when they visit their clergy; to encourage those who are diligent and successful in the work; and to reprove the indolent and the negligent. When Popish bishops confirm the youth of their communion, do they confirm no *profelytes* among them? Do they confirm *profelytes* without knowing them to be such? Have the Papists a lower opinion of the necessity, virtue, or efficacy of confirmation than *they* have who make the want of it in *New-England*, an argument for sending bishops thither? If not, is not the full liberty of *confirming* profelytes, one very considerable encouragement both to the priest and the profelyte in the *making* of them? In one word, is it possible to conceive how bishops can exercise *every* part of their function, while the inferior clergy are restrained from exercising *any* part of theirs? Mr. Apsborp tells us, "the *Answerer's* argument led him to speak of nothing else [besides every part of their peculiar function as bishops; confirming the youth, ordaining and visiting the clergy of their own communion.] And, continues "he, it is a known fact, that those things do give no offence "either to churchmen or dissenters in this kingdom." In my

1. The

i. The professed motive of those great churchmen who gave way to any movements towards

humble opinion, Mr. *Apthorp* might have been sorer of this *fact*, had he said that there are churchmen and dissenters in the kingdom *known to himself*, to whom those things give no offence. The kingdom of *England* is of large extent; and there may be, and certainly are, in it great numbers both of churchmen and dissenters, unknown to Mr. *Apthorp*, to whom those things do give offence. He proceeds, "Whence he [the Answerer of Dr. *Mayhew*] concludes, that the same things done by Protestant bishops "would give none in *New England*." THE SAME THINGS! Are then the *same things* and no other peculiar to the function of a Popish and a Protestant bishop respectively? Let not this be said, or even supposed. In the Pontifical published at *Rome* 1611, p. 57. the following words stand as part of the oath of every bishop at his consecration, *Hæreticos et rebelles Domino Papæ persequar et impugnabo*. The moment this oath is taken, *Persecution of heretics and rebels to the Pope*, becomes a part of the peculiar function of a Popish bishop. And when it is considered to whom these characters of heretics and rebels to the Pope are ascribed by the Papists in general, I apprehend, neither our churchmen nor dissenters will think this a token of *inoffensiveness* in the peculiar function of such bishop. Thanks to the better spirit of our reformers, no such thing is to be found in our office appointed for *The Consecration of Bishops*. But it is not impossible that something else might be found in it, which would give umbrage to the people of *New England* who dissent from the established church of the mother-country, and which, if a bishop should think himself obliged to support the full discipline of an episcopal church, might carry him somewhat beyond the three articles mentioned by Mr. *Apthorp*, as peculiar to the function both of a Protestant and a Popish bishop. Mr. *Apthorp*, I hope, will excuse me for taking these freedoms with his *Review*, when he considers, that it has been made the instrument by which somebody or other endeavoured



a reformation before the revolution, was not, if you will believe them, any conviction in their own

to fix upon the Author of the *Confessional*, an imputation of which every honest man would acquit himself if he could. The said Author, however, declares that no misrepresentation was intended by him, and to shew this, hath conformed himself, in this second edition, to what the Ticket writer calls a quotation, by substituting the very words of the *Answerer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations*, &c. as they stand in that pamphlet, leaving it to his readers to determine what the Author of the *Confessional* loses, or what the Author of the *Answer* gains by the alteration. As Mr. *Apsborp's* Review has been thus thrown in my way, and as it was the last performance which has appeared in the debate with the late excellent Dr. *Mayhew*, it is not unlikely but it may be esteemed by one side, as *decisive* of that not unimportant controversy, and that Dr. *Mayhew* was effectually silenced by it. I imagine, however, that an impartial reader of the particulars above may be of opinion, that Mr. *Apsborp's* Review is not wholly impregnable. And as the late Dr. *Mayhew* may be supposed to have been the best able to give his own reasons for not replying to it, I shall, upon this occasion, subjoin an extract from a letter of the worthy Doctor's, written to a friend in Great Britain (who had suggested to him, that his Reply to Mr. *Apsborp's* pamphlet was expected) dated, *Boston, April 7, 1766*. "In truth, Sir, I was sufficiently weary of that controversy, as I intimated at the close of my *Second Defence of the Observations*. Not that I thought I had a bad cause to manage, but because I had written three large pamphlets upon the point. Accordingly I signified in the last of them, that I should publish no more upon it, unless something both new and material should appear on the other side. In the opinion of sundry gentlemen here, for whose judgment I had much regard, as well as in my own meaner opinion, there was nothing in Mr. *Apsborp's* Review, &c. which deserved that character, or merited a particular reply. Neither, in minds,

minds, that any circumstance of doctrine, discipline, or worship in the established church, was really wrong. It was always asserted, that the church needed no reformation, and only condescended to these mootings partly to oblige the nonconformists with a hearing, and partly to convince them by argument, how little their dissent was to be justified: but might not one say with *more* truth,——much oftner to entertain the church's friends with a triumph after a victory preconcerted with the civil powers?

The divines, indeed, who were employed under King *William's* commission, were free enough in *acknowledging* and *characterizing* the blemishes in the church of *England*, at least, if the remaining, tho' imperfect, accounts of that transaction may be depended upon. And this has been given as a reason, why the *original* papers relating to it have been so carefully secreted from the public, as hitherto to have escaped the most diligent inquiries after them.

“deed, could I learn, that even the zealots of the episcopal  
“party here, considered it as of any consequence, unless it  
“were merely as the *last word*; an honour, of which I was not  
“ambitious. I had little or no hopes of convincing any, who  
“remained unconvinced after reading my three tracts upon  
“the subject of the missions; and was not such a *Salamander*  
“as to chuse to live long in the fire of controversy. Besides,  
“it was so long before the said *Review* appeared in these  
“parts, that the subject of it was become stale; it ceased to  
“engage the attention of either party here.”

And

And this *security* is, no doubt, one circumstance which hath given fresh courage to the church of *England*, once more to hold fast her integrity, and to return to her old posture of defence, in *memorials*, *schism-bills*, *alliances*, and other expedients, some of which shew that even *Bancroft* and *Laud* would not have been disparaged by learning some particulars of church-artifice from more modern masters of conformity.

2. Another thing the foregoing detail will help us to judge of, is the value of an argument supposed to be of great weight towards disculpating our great churchmen in their backwardness to promote a reformation; namely, that this matter is in the option of the civil powers, without whose concurrence (which perhaps might not be obtained) our most dignified clergy could not stir a step.

But here I would ask, what reason the clergy of the present times can have to doubt of the concurrence of the civil powers in the work of reformation? By looking back to former times, we see the civil powers have always made it a point to oblige and stand by the established clergy in all their perils; and, in one instance, actually fell with them for a season. But even then, their days of darkness were but few, in comparison with the prosperity they have enjoyed in the course of two centuries. Since when, we have  
seen



seen them rise from their *light afflictions* with redoubled vigour and advantage, so remarkably as to be able to check a reformation against the united endeavours of some of their own *false brethren* in the highest stations, and the most sanguine disposition in the sovereign himself to effect it.

Nor have we the least reason to imagine that their interest with the civil powers has declined to this hour. It is not much above ten years since the public was told by a great churchman, that "Things were then come to that pass, that the state seemed to be in more need of the support of the clergy, than they of the state's<sup>1</sup>." The reasons given for that presumption still subsist in their full force: nor to mention some later appearances, which seem to tend towards a farther need, in no long time. So that it is to be hoped we shall hear no more of this plea for the inactivity of the ruling clergy, till full proof is given to the world by a fair and open trial, that their sincere and zealous endeavours for a farther reformation, are actually controuled by the civil powers.

3. The last remark I shall make upon the foregoing facts is, that the alterations made in the forms of the church of *England*, instead of relieving the scruples of conscientious noncon-

<sup>1</sup> *View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy*, 8vo 1754. p. 5.

formists,

formists, greatly increased them. The *Savoy-Conference* has been compared to the council of *Trent*. Both were the effects of an unwelcome necessity. In both the obnoxious party presided, and gave judgment: and the event of both convinced the remonstrants respectively, how vain a thing it was to contend against the plenitude of church-power, and how much wiser they had been in their generation, in dispensing with things as they stood before these two *reforming* bodies undertook to *review* them.

I doubt not but the intelligent reader, who is moderately conversant in *English* history from the commencement of the present century, will perceive what room is left for pursuing reflections of the same sort through the last sixty years. But, as I may be thought by some to have already exceeded the just bounds of a preface, I shall for the present content myself with a few remarks upon one interesting circumstance in our present establishment, which has not a little employed the speculations of men of the first abilities of all parties.

There is not, perhaps, an instance of a law enacted in a protestant community, which is less defensible in a *religious* view, than that of the *sacramental test*, enjoined as a qualification for holding civil offices.

In *Charles II.*'s reign, which gave birth to it, a man who should have proposed the repeal of this law, with respect to *protestant dissenters*, would have

have passed for a *Socinian* at the best, perhaps for an *atheist*.

In the next reign, the inconveniences, and possibly the unrighteousness, of it were seen and felt, even by some of the great churchmen themselves, among whom *Sancreft* is named for one; and it was not imagined at that time, but that, upon any such deliverance from popery as the *Revolution*, the protestant interest would be relieved from such an incumbrance for all future time.

Perhaps, at that particular juncture, little more was considered among churchmen, than the ill policy of excluding so considerable a body of protestants, who were, to a man, zealous enemies to popery and arbitrary power, from provinces where they might have supported the common cause of public liberty, with the best effect.

But, after Mr. *Locke's* letters for *toleration* had appeared, it was presently perceived, though the title of them ran only for *toleration*, that his arguments concluded against the authority of any Christian society to prescribe religious tests or modes of worship, which were not clearly, plainly, and indisputably agreeable to the scriptures, whether with or without the sanction of the civil magistrate\*.

\* It is well and truly observed, in the Preface to the last beautiful edition of Mr. *Locke's* letters concerning *Toleration*, in quarto, 1765, "that Mr. *Locke* was not the first writer on



The first effect of Mr. *Locke's* reasoning appeared in a very sensible *protest*, in behalf of the rejected bill for abrogating the sacramental test, in the year 1689. No more, however, could then be obtained but a bare toleration, or exemption of protestant dissenters, from the penalties before laid upon them for holding and frequenting conventicles.

In the reign of Queen *Anne*, the friends of religious liberty were kept under by church memorials, and other alarms of the church's danger, calculated to inflame the people, which had all the success the party could wish. And no wonder, if it be true, what *Swift* tells us in his history of the four last years of the Queen, "that the whole sacred order was understood to be concerned in the prosecution of *Sacheverel* <sup>1</sup>."

But nothing exhibits a more lively picture of the sense and temper of those times, than the several attempts in favour of a Law against *Occasional* Conformity, related in Bishop *Burnet's* and other Histories; which, after three unsuccessful efforts, was at length carried in the year 1711. The game was then in high-church hands, who

"this subject; for that the argument was well understood and published during the civil war." All, therefore, that is meant by what is said above, is, that the attention of the public as well as the subject was then revived, which may easily be accounted for by the eminence and known abilities of the living author.

<sup>1</sup> P. 6.

played it so dextrously, as in the end to win the Schism-bill, and were within an ace of winning something else of infinitely more consequence.

But, providentially for the public, the reign of these politicians was now at an end. They were totally eclipsed by the accession of *George I.*, a pattern to good and righteous men, as well as to wise and upright sovereigns. Such, however, was the remaining leaven of the former reign, that all that could be effected in favour of Christian liberty, and even that after many struggles and violent opposition, was the repeal of the two acts, that against *Occasional Conformity*, and the other to prevent the growth of Schism.

Attempts, indeed, were made to relieve the Protestant dissenters from the hardships of the Test-act, both in this and the next reign, and perhaps something more ought to have been ventured on those occasions, than the politicians of those times were willing to put to the hazard. What we certainly know is, that these attempts did not miscarry for want of the hearty concurrence of the princes upon the throne.

In the mean time, whatever the political reasons might be for desisting from any farther molestation of the Test-act, it would have been strange, if, under the auspicious patronage of a Sovereign of the illustrious house of *Brunswick*, the sons of liberty should have been wanting to their cause, by sitting down in profound silence. The right-  
cousness

1      P R E F A C E to the

cousness of Test-laws was now discussed in form, by the accurate Bishop *Hoadley*, and the principles on which they were defended in a *religious* light, so effectually exposed and disgraced, that even the abilities of the inimitable *Sherlock* were found unequal to the task of supporting them.

In this state things remained for some time: The eyes of the most prejudiced began to open, and to see the equity of relieving the protestant dissenters from this ignominious distinction; and great hopes were conceived, that in no long time it would be removed; the rather, as even the conformists themselves were *occasionally* obliged to comply, not without some reluctance; *some* of them, I mean, who perhaps never had, nor would have given the church of *England* that particular assurance of their being in communion with her, if they had not been called upon by motives, in which their respect for her and her institutions had no share.

It may well be supposed, that this was a stroke which the high-church party could not bear with tolerable temper. But what was to be done? The argument was at an end, and personal attacks upon the adversary were to little purpose, who was equally unexceptionable as a *writer* and as a *man*, and who was only vulnerable in point of his conformity to a church, whose forms of discipline and government he had shewn, upon Gospel-principles, to be liable to so many important objections.



In this distressful hour of despondency, and when things, on the part of the *Test-men*, were going on fast towards a state of desperation, arose a champion for the church, who, *changing the old posture of defence*, undertook to vindicate the test-law upon the hypothesis of an *Alliance between Church and State*.

Two circumstances, indeed, appeared upon the outset of this undertaking, which bore an unpromising aspect towards the learned author's success.

The first was, that the question concerning *religious liberty* had already passed thro' the hands of *Milton, Locke, Hoadley, Sherlock*, and other masters of reasoning of the first reputation, which could not but raise some little prejudice against an undertaker, who proposed to strike into a new road. The learned author, moreover, could prevail with himself to say, even after the labours of these great men, that he found the subject in an *embroiled condition*<sup>1</sup>. Which, however, did not tend to abate the prejudice, more especially when it appeared that, in order to *disembroil* it, he availed himself of the aid of such writers as *De Marca* and *Bossuet*<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy, Lett. iv. p. 83.

<sup>m</sup> Of *De Marca*, Bishop *Burnet*, speaking of the authors from whom he collected materials for the work cited below, says,

—“The chief of whom is the late most learned Archbishop of *Paris*, *De Marca*, who has written very largely, and with great judgment and exactness, on this argument. But I can-

The other circumstance which incumbered his enterprize, was his proposing to support a TEST on such reasoning as would not destroy a TOLERATION<sup>a</sup>; by which it appeared that he meant such a TOLERATION *only* as presupposed the ESTABLISHMENT of a NATIONAL CHURCH, — a toleration consisting in an *indulgence* with respect to separate places of worship or different modes of discipline, or in allowances of partial and occasional conformity.

Whereas the toleration contended for by the advocates of religious freedom, was “*absolute liberty, just and true liberty, equal and impartial liberty* upon the principle that neither single persons, nor churches, nay nor even commonwealths, have any just title to invade the civil rights and worldly goods of each other, upon pretence of religion.” An attempt to make

“not commend his *ingenuity* so much, as I must do his other excellent qualities; for he has written defectively, and has concealed very many things, to which a man so conversant in all parts of ecclesiastical learning could not be a stranger.” Preface to Bishop Burnet’s *History of the Rights of Princes in the disposing of Ecclesiastical Benefices and Church-lands*, p. 7. De Marca wrote a voluminous book of *Alliance*. The *ingenuity* of Bossuet is more generally known, and may be seen in *Basnage’s* *Hist. de l’Eglise Reformée*, *Wake’s* *Exposition of the Doctrine of the Church of England*, 1687, and *Defence of it*, &c.

<sup>a</sup> View of Lord Bolingbroke’s *Philosophy*, Lett. iv. p. 83.

<sup>•</sup> See the Preface to the English translation of *Locke’s* first letter concerning *Toleration*, and the letter itself, p. 42. of the last edition.

a test-

a *test-law* consistent with this only true sense of *toleration*, may be considered in the same light as an attempt to make a thing *heavier than itself*, the want of which secret hath ruined many a hopeful trial at a *perpetual motion*.

For the rest, our learned author's principles are chiefly of the *political* kind, leading to expedients of *civil utility*. He was not, however, insensible, that, so far as the church was to contribute her *quota* to *this kind* of utility, she must have the authority of the GOSPEL.

Bishop Hoadley, from the circumstance that our Saviour had declared *his kingdom not to be of this world*, had inferred, that "*Christ is himself the sole Lawgiver to his subjects, and himself the sole Judge of their behaviour, in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation;—that he hath, in those points, left behind him no visible human authority; no viceregents, who can be said properly to supply his place; no interpreters, upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend; no judges over the consciences or religion of his people*."

Hence it followed, that no subjects of Christ's kingdom, under the name or notion of *the church*, could *convene*, as our author expresses it, with the civil magistrate, so, as to give up any points of *conscience* to his direction; nor could the magistrate accept of such overtures, or such conven-



tion, without usurping upon the province which Christ had reserved to himself.

This was immediate death to the *theory* of *alliance*; nor would the Bishop's interpretation of the text admit of any inference in favour of it.

Our learned author, therefore, was under a necessity of finding *another* interpretation, which would better bear what he had to build upon this text. And here it follows.

"Our Saviour saith, *My kingdom is not of this world*, which bears this plain and obvious sense, "that the kingdom of Christ, to be extended "over all mankind, was not, like the kingdom "of God, confined to the Jewish people, where "religion was incorporated with the state, and "therefore *of this world*, as well in the exercise "of it, as in the rewards and punishments by "which it was administered; but [the kingdom "of Christ] was *independent of all civil communities*, "and therefore *neither of this world* as to the "exercise of it, nor as to the rewards and punishments by which it was administered."

That a kingdom to be extended *over all mankind*, should not be like a kingdom confined to *one particular people*, is indeed *plain* and *obvious* enough; but is equally *plain* and *obvious* with respect to the *Roman* as the *Jewish* kingdom: and why the former should not be pitched upon as

the instance put into comparison with Christ's kingdom, especially as the declaration was made to a *Roman* governor, who might be apprehensive of our Saviour's pretensions to supplant *Tiberius*, is not quite so obvious. The difference too was the very same in the *Roman* as in the *Jewish* kingdom, both as to the exercise of it, and the rewards and punishments by which it was administered. Can any one suppose it to have been our Saviour's intent, on this occasion, to give *Pilate* an idea of the *peculiarities* of the *Jewish* government?

Be that as it may; our learned author's interpretation will *even yet* bear Bishop *Hoadley's* inferences. Whether it will bear any other, we may see as we go along.

"But, continues our author, whoever imagines that from this independency by institution, the church cannot *convene* and *unite* with the state, concludes much too fast."

Here the *kingdom of Christ* is turned into THE CHURCH, which in this place must mean some particular *formed society* of Christ's subjects, empowered *a priori* to act for themselves and all the rest, that is, for all mankind. But then, where is *this* church to be met with? A necessary question, which should have been answered before the learned author had stirred a step farther. And now for the reasoning by which this hasty conclusion is obviated.

"We have observed, saith the learned author, "that this property in the kingdom of Christ, "[*viz.* of being *not of this world*] was given as "a mark to distinguish it from the kingdom of "God. That is, it was given to shew, that this "religion extended to all mankind, and was not, "like the *Mosaic*, confined to one only people."

And why not as a mark to distinguish it from *all the rest* of the kingdoms of *this world*; a distinction as certainly intended in our Lord's declaration, as that mentioned by our learned author? The reason is plain. In that case, the kingdom of Christ could have *allied* with *none* of the kingdoms of *this world*, since the moment such alliance should take place, the *mark* would be *extinguished* of course; and for this I appeal to the learned author's own interpretation of the text, who makes the property of the kingdom of Christ, of being *not of this world*, a consequence of its being *independent of all civil communities*. But sink this *independency* in an *union* or *alliance* with civil community, and the kingdom of Christ becomes, to all intents and purposes, a kingdom of *this world*, both as to the exercise of it, and as to the rewards and punishments by which it is administered.

This *mark of distinction*, therefore, was not to appear with respect to *any* kingdoms of *this world*, but the *Jewish* only; and with that there was no danger that the kingdom of Christ should  
enter



enter into *alliance*, as it was now upon the point of being broken up.

But the dexterity of our learned author appears to the greatest advantage in the consequence he draws from the foregoing positions.

“CONSEQUENTLY, that very reason which made it proper for the *Mosaic* religion to be united by divine appointment to the state, made it fit the Christian should” ——— what? The cast of the argument and the *mark of distinction* prepare you to expect ——— “should not be united to the state.” But, no: this would have embroiled the *theory of alliance* with a witness; and therefore happily and seasonably does our learned author turn aside, and conclude ——— “made it fit that the Christian [religion] should be left free and independent.”

Agreed; *free and independent* of every legislator, judge, vicegerent, or interpreter, but Christ alone, TO THE END OF TIME.

No, here we part; for the learned author asks, “But to what end, if not for this, to be at liberty to adapt itself to the many various civil policies by a suitable *union and alliance*?”

And thus we see, not without some degree of surprize, that this very *independency* of the kingdom of Christ, which distinguished it from all civil communities, as a kingdom *not of this world*, is made an instrument of turning it into

as many kingdoms of *this world* as there are *civil policies* among the sons of men.

But to the question, "To what end, if not for *this*?"—And is our learned author really in earnest? Can he not perceive *one other* end for which the Christian religion was left *free and independent*?—An end proclaimed in every page of our Christian oracles.—In one word, the great, the gracious, the generous end of communicating its blessings and benefits to every INDIVIDUAL OF THE HUMAN RACE, even though he should be unconnected with, or excluded from, the privileges of every human establishment on the face of the earth.

Let the learned author now try to make *his* end consistent with *this*, to which the scriptures bear so ample and so often-repeated a testimony. We will be reasonable. One single passage of the New Testament, proving that "the Christian religion was left free and independent, that it might be at liberty to adapt itself to the many various civil policies, by a suitable union and alliance," will satisfy us. Nay, one single passage from which it may be *clearly* inferred\*. And thus

\* The learned author refers us, indeed, to a prophecy of *Isaiah*, xlix. 22, 23. which he cites thus: *Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up my hand to the GENTILES, and set up my standard to the people—and KINGS SHALL BE THY NURSING FATHERS, AND THEIR QUEENS THY NURSING MOTHERS.* This prophecy, he would have us believe, receives

much

much surely the learned author owes to his own argument; as many a plain, sincere Christian, even after all the pains taken with him in the book of *Alliance*, may, without such additional evidence, be extremely at a loss to conceive, what union or alliance between a kingdom which *is*, and a kingdom which *is not, of this world*, can with any propriety be called *suitable*.

Let us now attend to the upshot. "An alliance then we must conclude the Christian

its *ultimate completion* by the Christian religion's "adapting it-  
"self to the many various civil policies, by a suitable union and  
"alliance." Well then, let us see how this *completion* will turn out. If the Kings and Queens here mentioned represent the *state*, the party to be *nursed* by them represents the *church* in alliance with them. Now let us go on with the prophecy, for the learned author hath left it short. *They [the Kings and Queens, i. e. THE STATE] shall bow down to thee [THE CHURCH] with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet.* If this is to be the *ultimate completion* of the prophecy, we have reason to be thankful that it hath not yet taken place, and that we have no intimation in the Christian scriptures that it ever will, as the prophecy is here interpreted. The learned author hath all along taken it for granted, that church tyranny must be the consequence of the church's being independent on the state, and hath been at some pains to load the *protestant* assertors of this independency with this invidious *papistical* consequence; being *willingly ignorant*, as it should seem, that the independency contended for by the advocates for Christian liberty, is not the independency of any *visible society*, but of *individuals* only. But, to take the matter at the very worst, what will the state gain by bringing the church into its dependency, if the *humiliation* above described is to be the effect of this laboured alliance?

"church



“ church was at liberty to make, notwithstanding this *declared* nature of Christ’s kingdom. “ So far is true indeed, that it is debarred from “ entering into any such *alliance* with the state, “ as may admit of any LEGISLATOR in Christ’s “ kingdom but himself [that is, a power in the “ magistrate to alter doctrines.] But no such “ power is granted or usurped by the supremacy “ of the state, [which extends only to discipline].”

I must confess my ignorance. Till now I have thought *discipline* as proper an object of legislation as *doctrine*. And, unless Christ hath left no rules of discipline for the subjects of his kingdom, the civil magistrate and the church too are excluded from *altering* discipline by the same considerations which prohibit their *altering* doctrines. That Christ hath left rules or laws of discipline for his subjects, I think I may venture to assert on

\* See the *Alliance*, p. 186. and View of Lord Bolingbroke’s Philosophy, Lett. iv. p. 146. — There is not a word in the whole controversy concerning *Church-authority* of a looser and more equivocal signification than the word *discipline*. *Rites* and *Ceremonies* are reckoned by some writers among the articles of *discipline*. And yet *Rites* and *Ceremonies* may be *idolatrous*. *Tests* and *subscriptions* are considered by others, under the notion of *discipline*; and thus the magistrate, upon the principles of the Alliance, may have the power of *altering* doctrines. Bishop Hoadley’s state of the case prevents this confusion. Wherever conscience is concerned, whether in matters of doctrine or discipline, there all lawgivers or judges, Christ alone excepted, are excluded.

the

the testimony of the learned author himself, who, when the merits of this complex theory were not in agitation, could plainly see the superior authority of the *Christian* discipline in comparison with that of the *alliance*.

The case was this: A certain Chancellor of a diocese, an officer appointed to execute the code of discipline by the powers in *alliance*, having unhappily incurred the learned author's displeasure, is summoned by him before a FOREIGN JUDICATORY (a judicatory *foreign* to that wherein the said Chancellor presided), that is to say, HOLY SCRIPTURE. If this be really the case, what becomes of the ALLIANCE?

To this *foreign judicatory*. However, let us all appeal; and, when the *sacramental test* can stand its ground before this tribunal, it will readily be given up as an object of REFORMATION.

It may now, perhaps, be expected that I should give some account of a publication, which has in it so very little of the complexion of the times, and which appears at a season, when there is but little prospect of engaging the attention of the public to subjects of this nature and tendency.

The reader will perceive, that some part of these papers were written at times very distant from others, and not in the same order in which they now appear. Persons and facts are mentioned or alluded to, which, when they were noticed, were still upon the stage, but have now  
many

many of them disappeared; nor has the author perhaps been sufficiently careful to adjust his remarks upon them to the present period, so as to avoid the imputation of anachronisms.

The *Free and Candid Disquisitions*, and afterwards the *Essay on Spirit*, gave occasion to several little pamphlets on the subject of a review of our public service, and to the discussion of several particular points, which were supposed to be proper objects of it. And at the same time, when cards were not in the way, the same topics were debated in private parties.

Into one of these the author was accidentally thrown, where it was his hap to mention a glaring inconsistency in the case of subscription to our established *articles of religion*. Some gentlemen of good sense and respectable stations, then present, expressed the utmost surprize on the occasion; nor did a dignified divine, who also made one of the company, seem to have been apprized of the impropriety before it was then mentioned, though, for the honour of the church, he made an attempt at a solution by that sort of casuistry, of which several samples may be met with in the ensuing discourse.

One of the lay-gentlemen desired to have the case stated upon paper, which, after some time, was presented to him, and makes a part of the following work, though placed at some distance from the beginning. In going through the particulars



Particulars then to be considered, the author found new matter arising upon him; which he pursued at leisure hours, without thinking of putting any thing into form upon the subject immediately.

In those days, the two principal sees were filled with two prelates, well known, while they were in subordinate stations, for their zealous attachment to civil liberty, and for their enlarged, generous, and christian sentiments in religion; in which one of them persisted to the last moment of his life, and in the highest eminence of station, and gave proof of it in a remarkable instance, which, when the time comes to give his character its full lustre, will do him honour with our latest posterity.

Here was then encouragement to venture something for the truth, and on that fair occasion, the author methodized and put the finishing hand to his collections. But a sudden change in the face of affairs quickly convinced him, that a publication of such sentiments would be now quite out of season.

It will certainly now be demanded, if out of season *then*, what is it that hath brought to light a work of this sort at a period, when there is not only so considerable a change in the public taste, but when other circumstances, unfavourable to the cause of reformation, seem to dissuade  
an

an enterprize of this kind, for still more cogent reasons?

It may look like a paradox to alledge (in answer to this expostulation) that there are others who can give a better account of this matter than the author himself; which, however, is pretty much the case. Suffice it to say on the part of the author, that his principal inducement to acquiesce in the publication was, his observing the redoubled efforts of popery to enlarge her borders, without being at the pains, as heretofore, to cover her march, and the surprizing indifference with which some public and even clamorous notices of her progress were received, where, one would have thought, both interest and duty were concerned to remark and obstruct her passage.

As this is a matter of some consequence, I must beg a little more of the reader's patience for a few reflexions upon it.

Dr. Mosheim hath observed, that, "in these  
"latter days, this great and extensive commu-  
"nity [*the reformed church*] comprehends in its  
"bosom, Arminians, Calvinists, Supralapsarians,  
"Sublapsarians, and Universalists, who live to-  
"gether in charity and friendship, and unite  
"their efforts in healing the breach, and dimi-  
"nishing the weight and importance of those  
"con-

"controversies, which separate them from the  
 "communion of the *Romish* church".

It is to be wished that Dr. *Mosheim* had been a little more explicit upon this subject, particularly with respect to these different denominations uniting their efforts in healing the breach, and diminishing the weight and importance of those controversies, which separate them from the communion of the *Romish* church. It seems to me, that he meant to say, that the reformed churches, by uniting their efforts to heal the breach among themselves, had diminished the weight, &c. and, consequently, that the reformed churches have, in these latter days, shifted nearer to Popery. And so, I think, his learned commentator, Mr. *MacLaine* seems to understand this passage, upon which he gives the following note.

"How such a strange and groundless aspersions  
 "could escape the pen of our excellent histo-  
 "rian, is difficult to conceive. The reformed  
 "churches were never at such a distance from the  
 "spirit and doctrine of the church of *Rome*, as  
 "they are at this day. The improvements in  
 "science, that characterise the last and present  
 "age, seem to render a relapse into *Romish* su-  
 "perstition morally impossible in those who have  
 "been once delivered from its baneful influence.  
 "If the dawn of science and philosophy, towards

*Mosheim*, Comp. View, p. 574. Vol. II.



“the end of the sixteenth, and the commence-  
 “ment of the seventeenth century, was so fa-  
 “vourable to the cause of the reformation, how  
 “must their progress, which has a kind of influ-  
 “ence even upon the multitude, confirm us in  
 “the principles, that occasioned our separation  
 “from the church of *Rome*?”

This, I own, is specious, and there is no doubt, but the improvements in science, &c. may seem in theory to render a relapse into *Romish* superstition morally impossible with respect to the reformed churches; nor do I think Dr. Mosheim apprehended any such general relapse. But I hope Mr. Maclaine will excuse me for taking the liberty to observe, that, “whether the reformed churches were never at such a distance from the spirit and doctrine of the church of *Rome*, as they are at this day?” is a question of fact, the resolution of which, will not depend so much upon hypothetical reasoning, as upon the observation of what has actually passed in those reformed churches; and for the matter of fact, I own, I am strongly inclined to trust to Dr. Mosheim’s knowledge and integrity.

I am very ready to acknowledge, that “the dawn of science and philosophy, towards the end of the sixteenth, and the commencement of the seventeenth century,” was extremely favourable to the cause of reformation, and that the

the *progress* of science in those days, *for some time*, was *more* favourable still. But what I question, and what I should be glad to see well proved, is, that “the *influence* of science in promoting the cause of reformation, and subduing “the spirit and doctrine of the church of *Rome*, “has been equally powerful and successful in these “latter times, in proportion to the progressive “improvement of it?” And with respect to this question, till I am better satisfied, I am obliged to hold the negative. Methinks modern history, and the speculations of some very judicious observers, have not only shewn very considerable abatements in this *influence*, but have likewise very well accounted for them. And some circumstances are mentioned in the ensuing tract not altogether foreign to this purpose.

On another hand; has there been no progress, no improvement in science and philosophy in popish countries? This cannot be said. Are the improvements in these articles in some of those countries, *less* or *fewer*, than in *any* reformed country? Neither will this be affirmed. What intelligence, then, have we from those popish countries where these improvements are the most conspicuous, of a proportionable progress of religious reformation in them? In what respect is either the *spirit* or the *doctrine* of the church established in those countries altered from what it was in the days of *Galileo*? Mr. Mac-

laine informs us at the end of this note, that "the *essential* character of Popery is a spirit of "despotism and persecution, founded upon an "extravagant and ridiculous pretension to infallibility," in which I most cordially agree with him". And as long as this pretension lasts, we

"The learned and benevolent Dr. Worthington, in his *Essay on the scheme and conduct, procedure and extent of Man's Redemption*, published 1743, p. 156, hath intimated as if some of the grosser errors of Popery had of late been explained in a manner more agreeable to truth and scripture [than heretofore]. I suppose he might have the *emollients* of the late bishop of Meaux in his eye, most of which have been since disowned, and, some of them, if I mistake not, condemned by his own church. The truth is, these explanations were, as the worthy Doctor properly expresses it, *forced* from the said bishop and his coadjutors by the very nature of the service to which they were applied. The same entertaining and instructive writer adds a little lower, "Nor do the papists at present seem "to thirst so much after protestant blood."—But this, however, he qualifies by saying, "though there is reason to suspect "that they still retain but too much of the old leaven, *durst* "they suffer it to *work out*." Since the time that this observation was made, we have had repeated instances of the old leaven's working as much as ever, and of its being quite ready to *work out*, both in this and a neighbouring country, upon the first favourable occasion. For my part, I cannot but look upon these concessions, even with these *draw-backs* upon them, as instances of an *easiness* towards popery in protestants of the present age, unknown to our forefathers, and for which, however, they had full as much reason as we have. It is well known, by some late productions of popish advocates, what use they make of these concessions from protestants, even while they themselves (conscious of the truth of the case) are un-

shall



shall in vain look for any alteration either in the *spirit* or *doctrine* of the church which makes it.

The *seeming moral impossibility* of protestants relapsing into popery, to whatever it may amount, may, perhaps, be more reasonably accounted for, (especially among the multitude) from the influence of education, and particularly from an early and familiar acquaintance with the scriptures, than from any improvements in human science. It must indeed be confessed that human science has been eminently useful in the advancement of scripture-knowledge among scholars; but this has been the most remarkable, in points of *inferior importance*. In a gospel preached to the poor, and, consequently, adapted to all capacities, one would naturally look for a plainness and simplicity which does not want the elucidations of human science, in those articles at least which are of universal concern to people of all ranks and degrees. Accordingly we find this character given of, and fully exemplified in the Gospel of Christ. And this plainness and simplicity applies so materially to the confutation of the errors of Popery, that, even in the infancy of the Reformation, and where improvements in human science were totally out of the

able to shew, either from matters of fact, or any real modification of their ancient principles, that they have the least right to them. How long is this delusion to last, and where will it end?

question, the common people, only by reading the scriptures in their mother tongue, were enabled to put to silence the subtlest of the popish doctors with whom they were engaged, as may be seen in a variety of instances in *Fox's Martyrology*. And notwithstanding the kind of influence that science and philosophy may be supposed to have upon the multitude of these days, I very much question whether an equal number of them would acquit themselves so well in the like conflicts.

As to the proficient in modern science and philosophy, I make a very considerable difference between the fund of this kind of learning they lay in, and the actual influence it has upon them, with respect to their religious opinions. To suppose the *influence* equal to these *improvements*, is to suppose that a large majority of mankind will always be governed by their own convictions, and that no worldly motives or temptations whatever will seduce them into compliances and conformities to what they know to be wrong. There is the strongest presumption that the matter of fact is just contrary to this supposition, not to mention the indifference and secularity of the present times in comparison of the zeal and piety of the *first* protestants. The question, however, as I said above, is a question of fact, and to be determined by what has actually happened

pened among the reformed in those regions where these motives and temptations are laid in their way. Have we no reason to suspect, that if an accurate account were to be taken for a century backwards, the balance in point of *conversions* in those Roman Catholic countries which are the *most improved* in science and philosophy, would be greatly against the reformed religion?

By what particular proofs Dr. *Mosheim* would have supported his assertion, I pretend not to know. He may be supposed, however, to have had in his eye, among others, the doctrines of Arminianism. According to Mr. *MacLaine*, "Arminianism may be said to be predominant among the members of the church of England." I imagine it may have prevailed in some degree, among individuals in some other reformed churches abroad, besides those of the Remonstrants. But it will hardly be denied, that some of the doctrines of *Arminius* have a manifest tendency to diminish the weight and importance of certain controversies that separated the *first* protestants from the communion of the church of *Rome*. And thus far, at least, Dr. *Mosheim* appears to be well justified.

On another hand, improvements in philosophy, or something so called, are said to have

\* See Mr. *MacLaine's* next note.



made many sceptics in religion; in all churches reformed and unreformed. And scepticism, when, in a melancholy or a departing hour, it is mixed, as frequently has been the case, with a certain degree of apprehension of what may be *hereafter*, is very apt to take its repose in the bosom of that church, which offers the speediest and most effectual security *every way*, without putting the perplexed patient to the trouble of examining and determining for himself. And of all the churches in christendom, that which offers this sort of security with the greatest confidence, is, out of all question, the church of *Rome*.

The improvements in science and philosophy in the last and present ages, have, perhaps, never been exhibited to more advantage than in the famous *French* work called *Encyclopedie*. It is well known, however, that the freedoms taken with revealed religion in some articles of it, occasioned a public censure to be passed upon it, and, if I mistake not, a prohibition with respect to the sale of it. The gentlemen chiefly concerned in that noble compilation, are the greatest geniuses of *France*. It is needless to mention their names. They are eminent all over *Europe*. I have been informed, that all, or most of them, profess the Roman Catholic religion, and comply with the forms of that church. Without inquiring into the nature of the impressions those forms make upon them, we may presume they will conform to the end.—In the last age Cardinal *Richelieu* was called an *Atheist* over and over. Father *Caussin* insinuated something very like it to the king himself, and gave instances. *Richelieu* was a man of science, and an encourager of its progress. When he came to die, all suspicions of his heterodoxy vanished. He went through the

But

But this is not all. There is *one* science where in the reformed churches, perhaps in most countries, have made as remarkable improvements, as in any other: I mean the science of *politics*, which, as some think, has had no obscure effects upon them all. And church-politics, in reformed countries, chiefly aim at accommodating all the peculiarities in their respective systems, as much as may be, to the religion of the magistrate; a conduct, which, out of all doubt, cannot be defended in *every instance*, upon any principles which are of protestant original. It is the same sort of *policy* which hath laid to sleep so many controversies among the reformed, which some perhaps may think a blessing. Controversies, however, have had *this* good in them. They have kept the several parties among the reformed upon their guard not to incur the reproach of each other of advancing too near to the quarters of the common enemy. We are told, with some degree of exultation, that this contentious spirit is subsided. It is a good hearing, if it hath not sunk along with it, the *simplicity*, *godly sincerity*, and truly

minutest superstitions of the church, even though he was told by the curate who attended him, that some of them might be dispensed with on account of his *quality*. See *Vie de Cardinal Duc de Richelieu*. Cologne, 1696, p. 313 and 592 of the second volume. The *French Memoirs* afford other examples in great abundance.

*apostolical*

*apostolical zeal* of our first reformers against popery; otherwise we may have no great occasion to rejoice; and should be sent to learn what that meaneth, *MY peace I leave with you, MY peace I give unto you; NOT AS THE WORLD GIVETH, GIVE I UNTO YOU.*

But not to lay too much stress upon circumstances, suppositions, and inferences from mere appearances, let us attend to a remarkable fact, brought indeed on another occasion by Dr. Mosheim, but which fully justifies his observation above cited, and is the more interesting to us, as it immediately relates to our own established church.

“As to the spirit of the established church of England, says Dr. Mosheim, in relation to those who dissent from its rule of doctrine and government, we see it no where better than in the conduct of Dr. Wake, archbishop of Canterbury, who formed a project of peace and union between the *English* and *Gallican* churches, founded upon this condition, that each of the two communities should retain the greatest part of their respective and peculiar doctrines.”

“Compend. View, vol. II. p. 576. It hath lately been suggested by a learned and worthy person, that “Mosheim was most probably mistaken in ascribing *this* project to Archbishop Wake; for that it appears from this Archbishop’s article in the *Biographia Britannica*, vol. VI. part ii. that the project in which Dr. Wake was concerned, was first started by the

What



What a door is here opened for reflexion! A Protestant Archbishop of *Canterbury*, a pretended

"French Doctors of the *Sorbonne*, and consequently was not  
 "formed by the Archbishop. Nor is the account in the said  
 "article at all more favourable to the condition mentioned by  
 "Mosheim. For, instead of stipulating that each community  
 "should retain the greatest part of their respective and peculiar  
 "doctrines, the Archbishop, according to his Biographer, con-  
 "stantly maintained the justice and orthodoxy of every individual  
 "article of the church of England, without making the least con-  
 "cession towards approving the ambitious pretensions of the church  
 "of Rome. Upon these grounds it is concluded that Mosheim was  
 "mistaken, and confounded the transactions between Archbishop  
 "Wake and the Doctors of the *Sorbonne* in 1718, with a project  
 "of union with the Gallican church, formed by Charles Leslie,  
 "a Nonjuror, in a book intituled, *The Case of the Regale and*  
 "*of the Pontificate*, first published in 1701, and afterwards,  
 "with additions, in 1702. Which project of Leslie is men-  
 "tioned by Bishop Burnet in the *Introduction* to his History of  
 "the Reformation, vol. III." But this is a state of the case  
 to which I can by no means agree; and shall now give my  
 reasons why I think, 1. that Mosheim could not mean Leslie's  
 project; 2. that he could mean no other than the project of  
 which an account is given in the *Biographia Britannica*, article  
 WAKE. 1. Leslie's project was a project in a book and no  
 more, no one step having been taken towards carrying it into  
 execution. Leslie seems indeed to have had a notion of some  
 project of this kind so early as the year 1682; for he says,  
 p. 263. of the 2d edition, "The English convocation not being  
 "suffered to sit while that of France lasted, [he means the  
 "Assembly of the French clergy in 1682] rendered any treaty  
 "between them impracticable." But no such treaty was then  
 dreamt of; and Leslie's own principles were then very different  
 from those he espoused after the Revolution. [See his article,  
*Biog. Brit.* vol. V.] 2. Leslie's project in 1701 was a mere  
 chimæra of his own brain, entertained only by himself, or per-

champion too of the protestant religion, sets on foot a project for union with a popish church,

haps some of his nonjuring brethren of that time; an idle vision of what might have been done, if all parties had been affected as he would have had them; which he could not but know, if he had common sense, was much farther from being the case *then*, than it was in 1682. 3. *Leslie*, in this project, was not disposed to stand upon *any* condition with the *Gallican* church, save only their disowning the regal supremacy in spirituals, so far as that was implied in the *Regale*. "The *Gallican* clergy," says he, "have limited the supremacy of the Pope to the constitutions of their own national church; and, if they keep as clear of the *Regale*, *their Reformation will exceed ours*." And again: "The generality of the *Roman Catholics in England* are of the same sentiments with the *Gallican* church concerning the supremacy of the *Papal* see; and it is the *Papal supremacy alone* which stands in the way to oppose such a glorious re-union." [See *Case of the Regale*, p. 258—265.] Could the man who wrote thus ever be supposed to covenant with the *Gallican* church for retaining the *peculiar* doctrines of the church of *England*? or can it be imagined that *Mosheim* was so ignorant of our constitution as to take these for the principles of the church of *England*? 4. If this is the project which Bishop *Burnet* in the *Introduction* above-mentioned calls an *impudent proposal*, as probably enough it is, we must take along with it an account of the men to whom he ascribes it. According to the Bishop, "they held the necessity of *auricular confession, priestly absolution, the sacrifice of the mass, the independence of the church on the state. They openly recommended the devotions of the church of Rome; many of them wilified the Reformation and the Reformers, &c.*" Now these were exactly *Leslie's* doctrines and principles, but were not the doctrines and principles of the church of *England*. Consequently the projector meant by Bishop *Burnet* and the projector meant by Dr. *Mosheim* were different projectors. 5. *Leslie's* project has been very little noticed by those writers from whom, if it had been con-

and

and that with concessions in favour of the grossest superstition and idolatry; and this represented as

considerable enough to be mentioned, we should have had a full and particular account of it. What figure it made in the foreign Journals, or whether any, I have had no opportunity of being informed. None, however, I will venture to say, that could lead *Mosheim* into so gross a mistake. At home it seems to have been too contemptible for any special notice. Bishop *Burnet* says not one word of it in the History of his own Times, under the years 1701 or 1702. He is equally silent concerning it under the year 1709, though he there gives an account of *Leslie*, his principles and his writings [vol. II. fol. p. 538]; and I suppose every where else, except where he makes a transient mention of it as an *impudent proposal* in the Introduction above-mentioned, which did not appear till the year 1715. Dr. *Calamy* indeed, in his Abridgment of *Baxter's* Life, edit. 2d, 1713, mentioning *The Case of the Regale and of the Pontificate*, p. 645, as one of the pieces written to vindicate the high pretensions of the convocation, gives a short but comprehensive abstract of the project of union contained in it; by which, as well as by the book itself, it appears to be the romantic flight of a crazy head, to which no man of sense would pay the least regard. And that, I suppose, might be the reason why the compiler of *Leslie's* article in the *Biographia Britannica*, though he gives an account of the book, so far as it relates to convocational authority, thought fit quietly to pass over the project of union, fearing perhaps to derogate from the merit of his hero, by leaving him under suspicions of insanity. I do not bring these particulars as a proof, or even a presumption, that *Mosheim* knew nothing of *Leslie's* project, but as a proof, that, whether he knew of it from the book itself, or from other accounts, he must learn it with these circumstances, and consequently could not mistake it for a project of the church of England. II. *Mosheim* could mean no other project of union with the *Gallican* church, than the project of which an account

the



the *spirit* of the established church of *England*, in relation to those who dissent from its rule of doctrine and government!

is given in the *Biographica Britannica*, article *WAKE*. The compiler of that article doth not disprove any thing that *Mosheim* hath said upon the subject. He hath even left it highly probable that the Archbishop was the *first mover* in this project. Consider well how the facts lye in the *Biography*. Mr. *Beauvoir*, chaplain to the earl of *Stair*, then ambassador at the *French* court, writes a letter to the archbishop, dated *December 11, 1717, O. S.* In this letter (which, by the way, is an answer to one of the archbishop's of *November 27th*) mention is made of *Du Pin*, with an account, that he, the said *Du Pin*, and certain other doctors of the *Sorbonne*, "wished for an union with the "*church of Eng'and, as the most effectual means to unite all the "Western churches.*" Can any man be certain that *Beauvoir* mentioned this merely of his own head, without some previous occasion given in the archbishop's letter to him for such conversation with the *Sorbonne* doctors? There is too an *&c.* in this copy of Mr. *Beauvoir's* letter, very suspiciously placed, as if to cover something improper to be disclosed. Well, in answer to this letter, his Grace, as the Biographer informs us, made *handsome mention* of Dr. *Du Pin*. What this *handsome mention* was, we are left to guess, though, no doubt, the Biographer could have informed us, as the *handsome mention* is made in a letter to one of the *Beauvoir*-family, in whose possession, we are told, there is a collection of letters and other pieces relative to this project, *Remark [2]*. But had the Biographer given us this letter, together with that of *November 27th*, they might probably have discovered what the Biographer did not want we should know, namely, the share that Dr. *Wake* had in forming the project of an union between the two churches. And here I cannot help observing, that *these* Biographers, and particularly he whose signature is at the foot of *Wake's* article, are particularly dextrous at plaistering up the weaknesses of high churchmen. But to proceed: This *handsome mention* immediately produced a letter from *Du Pin*, wherein "he ex-

'Tis

'Tis true, there are *protestant* dissenters from the rule of *government* of the established church

"pressed his desire of an union between the two churches of England and France, and of entering into a correspondence with his Grace for that purpose." His Grace accepts the party; a formal treaty commences, and is carried on in a correspondence of some length, and, please to observe, was not broken off by the *archbishop*. So that if he did not actually bring forth the project, he took upon him the pious care of *warfing* it, and may be justly called the *foster-father* of it. These are strong circumstances towards justifying *Mosheim's* account of forming the project. 2. *Mosheim* says, "that the project was founded upon the condition that each of the two communities should retain the greatest part of their respective and peculiar doctrines." Nor does the Biographer contradict this account by saying, that "the Archbishop always maintained the justice and orthodoxy of every individual article of the church of England, without making the least concession towards approving the ambitious pretensions of the church of Rome." What were these pretensions? They were pretensions contrary to the position that "Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only founder, source, and head of the church." This, as appears from the context, was the article which the Archbishop constantly insisted on, in opposition to the ambitious pretensions of the Pope and the church of Rome. Ay, but the Archbishop always maintained the justice and orthodoxy of every individual article of the church of England." True, and this he might do, and still give some of them up for the sake of peace and union. And does the Biographer say that the Archbishop made no concessions with respect to these articles? He hath led some people, it seems, to think so, by his artful manner of expressing himself. But if this had really been the case, the treaty could not have gone on a step farther. Concessions must be made on both sides, or peace and union could not ensue. Accordingly the Biographer exhibits divers concessions and modifications offered by the agents of the *Gallican* church; carefully however keeping out of sight any particular concessions made by the Archbishop. But truth will break  
of

of England, who agree with her in her rule of doctrine; and Dr. Mosheim's instance being

forth after all possible endeavours to stifle it, and the Biographer is obliged at last to inform us; that, upon the French court's interposing, and breaking off the treaty, "all the letters which Dr. Piers de Girardin was obliged to give up (*viz.* the Archbishop's letters, and copies of those which had been sent to his Grace) were sent to Rome, as so many trophies gained from the enemies of the church." But upon what could these trophies be erected, but upon the concessions made to the church in the Archbishop's letters? And upon what evidence but that of the concessions made by the Archbishop in the course of this correspondence, could the learned Divines of the Gallican church become sensible of his Grace's catholic benevolence; as the Biographer assures us was the case. Concessions then were made on both sides. And so we learn likewise from Mosheim, who by saying that the greatest part of the peculiar doctrines of each community were to be retained, plainly admits that some were to be given up. 4. I have observed above, that the obscurity and insignificance of Leslie's proposal renders it highly probable that it was never much noticed. But far different was the case of the other project. According to the Biographer, "it engrossed the whole conversation of the city of Paris. The Lord Stanhope, and the British Ambassador, Lord Stair, were congratulated thereupon by some great personages in the royal palace." In order to break the treaty, "an alarm-bell was rung by the Jesuits and Constitutioners against no less considerable a person than Cardinal de Noailles. The French ministry interposed, and gave the coup de grace to the project. Trophies, gained from the enemies of the church, were sent to Rome to proclaim the victory, and the Abbot du Bois rewarded with a Cardinal's Cap, for his discovering and defeating the project." These circumstances must have announced the project to all Europe; and if after this Mosheim could either be ignorant of it, or capable of mistaking it for a romantic proposal in a pamphlet published sixteen or seventeen brought



brought as an indication of the spirit of the church of England in general; it might be sup-

years before, towards the accomplishment of which not a finger was moved by any man, there is absolutely no depending upon a single fact recorded in his whole book. ——— N. B. Since I wrote as above, I have been informed by a very accurate friendly that there is no mention made of any book or pamphlet under the title of *The Case of the Regals, and of the Pontificate*, in the *Journal des Savants* from 1701 inclusive to 1704. I likewise recollected that there were some citations from that book in the Preface to *Tindal's Rights of the Christian Church*, which I have therefore consulted, and find that *Lesslie's* proposal is there taken notice of, p. lxxiv, lxxvi. with a severe censure upon the Lower House of Convocation for passing by that, and some other Jacobite pieces, without the least mark of disapprobation, tho' they complained of, and thought themselves at liberty to censure several other books, even without a Royal Licence, p. lxxiv. Mr. *Le Clerc*, in his *Bibliothèque Choysie*, vol. XI. art. vii. p. 305, gave an account of *Tindal's* book, but more particularly of this Preface. Upon perusing this extract, it appears, that though *Le Clerc* makes no express mention of *Lesslie's* project, quoted in *Tindal's* preface, yet it is plain he had it in his eye, and alluded to it in the following general remark. "The author [meaning *Tindal*] cites several passages taken from English books which I have not seen; but, if they are faithfully cited, there are people in England who carry ecclesiastical pretensions farther in a Protestant Kingdom, than the *Gallian* church does in a Catholic Kingdom. Their projects cannot succeed without overturning every thing, and without putting themselves in danger of falling into a worse condition than that of any Catholic country." He adds a little afterwards: "It is a hopeful undertaking to preach up a *divine right*, if the laws of men are contrary to it. The establishment of it can never be accomplished, as may be seen by the example of the Protestants on this side the water, who are no more moved with what the

posed this established church would go as far to meet *these* dissenters, as to meet the papists. — I

“ *High-Churchmen of England* say concerning *divine right*, than “ if they had never mentioned a word of it.” *Bibl. Choisie*, Tom. X. p. 360, 361. Ed. 2. From these passages it appears, that Mr. *Le Clerc* had not seen *Lessie's* book at the time of its publication. It appears likewise what his judgment was of the principles of *Lessie* and his Non-juring brethren, and of the projects founded upon them, and how little they were regarded by foreign Protestants. *Mosheim* quotes *Le Clerc's Bibliotbeque Choisie*, upon more occasions than one, and could hardly overlook this remarkable extract. But indeed he did not want *Le Clerc's* information to learn that the principles of the Nonjurors and High-Churchmen are not the principles of the church of England. “ The Nonjurors or High-Churchmen, he tells us, “ differ in several things from the members of the Episcopal church [of England] in its present establishment.” Vol. H. p. 508. *Lessie* had made too much noise in the world, in quality of chaplain to the Pretender, and more especially by his famous letter from *Bar le duc*, in favour of his Master, about the end of *Queen Anne's* reign, for any one, who had ever heard of his name, to be ignorant of his denomination as an Ecclesiastic. Whence we may safely conclude, it was impossible for *Mosheim* to take his measure of the spirit of the established church of England from *Lessie's* principles or projects. I do not think, indeed, that the Church-principles of Dr. *Wake* were many degrees lower than *Lessie's*, if one may judge from his letters to Mr. *Courayer*, exhibited by his Biographer. And if *Mosheim* had classed the Archbishop with those “ who, tho' “ far from being Nonjurors, or otherwise disaffected to the “ present happy establishment, yet form pompous and ambitious “ conceptions of the authority and jurisdiction of the church, “ and would raise it to an absolute independence on all human “ power,” he would have done the Archbishop no injury, perhaps indeed rather an honour among “ the many such, who, with

with this could be said. But our history affords no instance of an archbishop of *Canterbury* negotiating with protestant dissenters upon any such condition as that mentioned by *Mosheim*: and such of them as, since the Reformation, might have had an inclination that way, have been too wary to go so far as *Dr. Wake* is said to have done with *Du Pin*. And if the conduct of the church of *England* is to be judged of by that of Archbishop *Wake*, the opposition of that prelate to the repeal of the Schism-bill shews, that an union with protestant dissenters, upon the condition offered to the papists, is the last thing the established church of *England* would think of.

But, happily for us, *Dr. Mosheim* was mistaken in taking his measure of the *spirit* of the established church of *England*, from the *spirit* of an archbishop of *Canterbury*. Bishops are as apt to be intoxicated with power and pre-eminence as other mortals, and have too often been tempted to extend their domination beyond its *established* bounds, when, if they had been called to account, the church established (even upon principles of the *Alliance*) must have disowned their authority, because the law and the magistrate would. I am not sufficiently informed of the circumstances

“as he tells us, are to be found even among those who go  
“under the *general* denomination of the *Low-church* party.”  
That is, who usurp a denomination which does not belong to them. See his note at the bottom of the page above-cited.



of this transaction of Archbishop *Wake*, to know what progress he had made in it\*. But I take it for granted, that, before he could bring it to bear, it must have passed through *other* hands; and I remember enough of the times when Dr. *Wake* figured at the head of the church, to be very certain that it would *then* have been lost labour to solicit the consent of a majority even of the members of the church of *England* to an union with the *Gallican* (that is, the *French* popish) church, even though all the bishops upon the bench had recommended it.

Is our historian then to be condemned for his temerity in making such a judgment of the church of *England*? By no means. A treaty of this kind, openly avowed, espoused, and promoted by an archbishop of *Canterbury*, and with respect to which there was no *apparent* opposition, might appear to a foreigner a sufficient indication of the spirit of the whole community, and no improper instance of *one* reformed church, at least, "using her efforts, in these latter days, to diminish the weight and importance of those controversies that separate her from the communion of the church of *Rome*."

And here I cannot help remarking that Mr. *MacLaine*, who censures *Mosheim* for his general reflection on the Protestants, seems not only to

\* When this was written, the author had not seen Archbishop *Wake*'s article in the *Biographia Britannica*.

acknowledge

acknowledge the truth of this particular fact, but likewise to give it the sanction of his approbation.

"The interests of the protestant religion, says he, could not be in safer hands than Archbishop *Wake's*. He, who so ably and successfully defended protestantism as a controversial writer, could not surely form any project of peace and union with a Roman-catholic church, the terms of which would have reflected on his character as a negotiator &c."

What character Archbishop *Wake* deserved as a negotiator, the public may now judge from his article in the last volume of the *Biographia Britannica*. Suffice it for the present to say, that the Protestant religion never did, nor ever will, want a negotiator with a Roman Catholic Church. If the proposing an union with a popish church was impudent in *Leslie*, it was at the best officious and presumptuous in Dr. *Wake*, who should have better known his duty to the church over which he presided, as well as the deference due to the laws of his country, than to have entered into a negotiation of that nature without any authority from either. As for his talents for this kind of negotiation, they are pretty well laid open by his Biographer. It appears by his account, that Dr. *Wake* was fairly duped by the French politicians giving the line, and letting things go on to a certain length, till the negotiator was fallen irrecoverably into the ambuscade. The event of which was, that, as the Archbishop was understood to negotiate for and on the behalf of the church of England, the church of England, by his management, became exposed to the triumphs of her enemies, for which the Archbishop ought to have been severely censured. By the way, it should seem as if this negotiating spirit was not yet totally extinguished among us, and as if some of us wanted still to be doing in that way. In the end of a Dedication pre-

Surely Mr. *MacLaine*, when he expressed himself thus, did not reflect upon the condition mentioned by Dr. *Mosheim* as the basis of the treaty between the two churches, namely, that each of the two communities should retain THE GREATEST PART OF THEIR RESPECTIVE AND PECULIAR DOCTRINES. When we consider to what these *peculiar* doctrines amount, even in the modified popery of the *Gallican* church, what are we to think of that man's *Protestantism*?

fixed to a pretty bulky compilation of Ecclesiastical Law, published no longer since than 1763. I find it thus written: "Perhaps a *middle state* between WHAT THE CHURCH ONCE WAS, and WHAT IT NOW IS, may be the condition most desirable." What the church of *England* once was, the church of *Rome*, I apprehend, *now is*; and how we shall come at this *desireable condition* without some sort of *negotiation* with her, and taking in HIS HOLINESS as a party to the compromise, I am not canonist enough to determine. *Leslie* indeed was absurd enough to desire that the *Gallican* church might be more popish than she really was. Archbishop *Wake* flew not quite so high: and, as I take it, this *middle state* was precisely the *most desireable condition* he wanted to bring us to. But the base luck he had in the attempt, one would have thought, had given us enough of it, for one century at least. To be serious, I have read in the writings of some men of no little eminence in the church of *England*, that, in order to perfect her Reformation, she should go a good way farther from what she ONCE was, than she NOW IS. But as to this *middle way* of reforming *backwards*, I have no great opinion of it; and was, not many years ago, much inclined to hope, that every proposal and every wish of that tendency had been buried in the graves of the LAUDS, the LESLIES, and the WAKES, never more to rise again in a land of religious and civil liberty.

who



who should be ready to unite with her upon the terms above-mentioned?

Dr. Wake's merit, as a controversial writer for the protestant religion, will be readily acknowledged; nor is his conduct (friendly to reformation) at the trial of Sacheverell forgotten. But he was not THEN Archbishop of Canterbury. It is well known what alteration an *elevated* situation makes in the magnitude, arrangement, and effect of objects, in the same prospect taken from an inferior position. This had its influence upon Dr. Wake, and it has had the same upon others. After all, this instance of a reformed church growing more placable towards *Romish* doctrines, is, on the behalf of Dr. Mosheim, an instance *ad hominem* to Mr. Maclaine, even with Mr. Maclaine's own suffrage, who will therefore, it is hoped, abate of his resentment towards that excellent historian, and consider his remark in a less invidious light than that of an *aspersio*.

Mr. Maclaine, indeed, must be much better informed concerning the state of religion *abroad*, than we in this island; and he assures us, in this present year, 1765, that "the reformed churches were never at such a distance from the spirit and doctrine of the church of Rome as at this day;" and if this is said upon good grounds, we cannot but rejoice that our foreign protestant brethren are so stedfast and immoveable, and have less reason to be alarmed at the contrary

appearances at home, where Mr. *MacLaine* will allow us to be competent judges in our turn.

It hath been lamented of late, that the zeal and vigilance both of pastors and people in the church of *England*, against popery and popish emissaries, is visibly declined. The papists, strengthened and animated by an influx of *Jesuits*, expelled even from popish countries for crimes and practices of the worst complexion, open public Mass-houses, and affront the laws of this protestant kingdom in other respects, not without insulting some of those who endeavour to check their insolence. It is not long ago, that we were told, with the utmost coolness and composure, in a pamphlet written expressly in defence of some proceedings in a certain episcopal society, and, as is conjectured, by somebody in no ordinary station, that “*Popish Bishops go about here, and exercise every part of their function WITHOUT OFFENCE, AND WITHOUT OBSERVATION.*” A circumstance that can no otherwise be accounted for, than upon the supposition that the two hierarchies are growing daily more and more into a resemblance of each other; which supposition is indeed necessary for the support of the point, in proof of which this notable fact is employed. Surely these *phenomena* were not common, even in Archbishop *Wake’s* time.

<sup>2</sup> Answer to Dr. *Mayhew’s* Observations.

Our protestant dissenters in general have, I hope and believe, very different conceptions of the malignity of popish principles, and of their fatal aspect upon the civil and religious rights of *Great Britain*. I know some of the worthiest and most judicious among them, who see with concern and anxiety the little interruption that is given to the unwearied endeavours of treacherous priests to pervert his Majesty's protestant subjects to their intolerant superstition, and consequently from their allegiance. — A late case, however, remarkable enough to have taken up no little room in the public prints, hath discovered, that *all* the leading characters among them are not of the same stamp, and that popery itself may be divested of its terrors in the eyes of a *once* zealous champion for religious liberty in its fullest extent, when taken into the protection of a man, who, for the time being, had the distribution of the loaves and the fishes.

But let us now proceed to inquire what popery hath done to entitle herself to this complaisance from the reformed churches; what steps she hath taken, or what disposition she hath shewn, to meet all or any of these churches half-way?

And here I will not ask whether the papists have endeavoured to diminish the weight and importance of those controversies they have with us, which are merely of the *religious* kind. I will not enquire whether and how far the church



of *Rome* hath modified her absurd and impossible doctrine of *Transubstantiation*. I will not examine her on the head of *purgatory*, *saint-worship*, *relics*, *masses for the dead*, *penances*, and other articles, which have no immediate ill effect upon civil society. I will only inquire whether popery hath reduced her ancient pretensions so far, as to become a friendly, benevolent, and charitable neighbour to persons of the reformed religion.

In the first place, hath she acquitted the protestants of *heresy*? If not, is she convinced that *heretics* ought to be tolerated, and that she ought to keep her faith and perform her covenants with them, as well as with persons of her own communion? Or hath she receded from her claim to infallibility, on which these other doctrines are built?

Have the papists of *Great Britain*, in particular, given the King and his Government the security of their allegiance, as protestant subjects do? Do they acknowledge no King of *Great Britain* but his Majesty King *GEORGE III*? Have not a majority of English papists of rank and fortune *Jesuits* in their houses, as directors of their consciences? Have not their youth been sent to be educated among *Jesuits*? Are not the Roman-catholic priests, stationed all over *England*, chiefly of the *Jesuitical* order? Is it not the doctrine of the *Jesuits* that princes may be excommunicated by the Pope, and afterwards deposed

deposed or murdered? Are not all Protestant princes, and particularly the King of *Great Britain*, considered by this order of men, as already excommunicated? Are not all persons whose consciences are directed by *Jesuits* obliged to believe as the *Jesuits* themselves believe? And are not they, who hold these opinions, sworn enemies to the protestant government of these Kingdoms?

If these questions cannot be answered to the satisfaction of a protestant people, it becometh every good subject to our gracious Sovereign, and every friend to this country, to keep up a spirit of vigilance and attention to every motion of these dangerous inmates, whom we daily see strengthening their hands with new converts, of whom the leaders of this malignant party will not fail to avail themselves, the moment they find their numbers sufficient to give them an equal chance in a struggle to wrest out of our hands our inestimable rights and liberties civil and religious.

But you will ask, "What has all this to do with subscription to *Articles of religion*, and the establishment of *Confessions of faith* and doctrine in protestant churches?"

Not so little as you may imagine. All religious impositions in protestant societies, not warranted by scripture, and which must be submitted to, on the pain of wanting bread, have a tendency

tendency to lessen the apprehensions, that they who have so much at stake as British subjects have, ought to entertain of the encroachments of Popery. Men of liberal education, finding they cannot be completely qualified for certain public stations, without complying with terms, of the rectitude of which they are not satisfied, and with which they must comply, or lose the expense as well as the fruits of their education, will naturally be loath to forego the means of their subsistence for a scruple which is not countenanced by one example in a thousand, and will therefore comply at all events. They will be apt to suspect, that a free examination into the merits of the case might leave impressions, which would either disappoint their prospects in life, or, in case of compliance, bring upon them anxieties that would embitter every emolument arising from their profession. What wonder that, in these circumstances, they should take up with the first flimsy casuistry suggested to them by a fellow-feeling brother? or, which is the shorter cut, and by far the most current anodyne, repose themselves in the authority of the church?

In either case, they are in a train which would lead them with equal security to acquiesce in the genuine impositions of popery. The cases only differ in the degrees of *more and less*: and they of course must be tender in asserting the privileges of *christian liberty*, on the peril of  
being



being mortified with recriminations, which the reproof of their own hearts would force them to apply, not without painful sensations. Nor is there any alternative, but a state of profligate secularity, disposing men to seek affluence, power, and dignity at any rate, and by any means that will give them the speediest possession; and with such men, popery and protestantism, the evangelists and the mass-book, are upon a level.

This is the way that some people have of accounting for the omission of the MASTER ARGUMENT against popery, in those few and superficial discourses on the subject, which are now-a-days heard from the pulpit.

It can never be for the interest of a free state to have men under this kind of distress in any public office; much less those who are callous, and perfectly proof against such feelings. It may be for the interest of a church to have a hank of this kind upon the clergy; but it must be the interest of a church, with which it is not for the interest of a free protestant state to cultivate an *alliance*.

being afflicted with temptations, which the

power of the Lord Jesus Christ is

able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

and by any means that the Lord Jesus Christ

is able to overcome, and by any means that

the Lord Jesus Christ is able to overcome,

THE  
CONFESSIO

---

THE  
CONFESSIO

---

CONFESSIO

---

CHAP. I.

*A summary View of the Rise, Progress, and Success  
of established Confessions of Faith and Doctrine  
in Protestant Churches.*

**W**HEN the Protestants first withdrew  
from the communion of the Church  
of Rome, the principles they went up-  
on were such as these.

“JESUS CHRIST hath, by his gospel,  
“called all men unto liberty, the glorious liberty  
“of the sons of God, and restored them to the  
“privilege of working out their own salvation  
“by their own understandings and endeavours.  
“For this work of salvation sufficient means are  
“afforded in the holy scriptures, without having  
“recourse to the doctrines and commandments  
“of men. In these scriptures all things needful  
“for spiritual living and man’s soul’s health are  
“mentioned and shewed. Consequently, faith  
“and



“and conscience, having no dependence upon  
~~“man’s laws, are not to be compelled by man’s~~  
 “authority; and none other hath the Church of  
 “Rome to shew for the spiritual dominion she  
 “claimeth. The church of Christ is congregated by the word of God, and not by man’s  
 “law; nor are the King’s laws any farther to be  
 “obeyed, than they agree with the law of God.”

—Private Christians being thus left at liberty, by the original principles of the Reformation, to search the scriptures for the grounds of their religion, and to build their faith on this foundation only, a very moderate share of sagacity would enable the leading Reformers to foresee, that diversity of opinions concerning many points of doctrine would be unavoidable; and that from hence frequent occasions of offence would arise among themselves, not without some advantage to the common adversary.

Whether they might not, in a good measure, have prevented any very ill consequences of this liberty without departing from the simplicity of the Scripture-plan; that is to say, whether they might not have kept the terms of communion sufficiently open for pious and reasonable Christians of very different opinions to have complied with them, without abridging their Christian liberty, or doing violence to their consciences, cannot now be determined. Certain it is, that such an experiment was never tried, nor perhaps ever  
 thought

thought of, till the distemper was gone too far to be cured.

Instead of making this experiment, the Reformers, having unhappily adopted certain maxims as self-evident, namely, that "there could be no edification in religious society without uniformity of opinion,"—that "the true sense of scripture could be but *one*,"\* and the like, presently fell upon the expedient of *preventing* diversity of opinions, by contracting their original plan in agreement with these maxims. The *one* sense of scripture was determined to be the sense of the primitive church, that is to say, the sense of the orthodox fathers for a certain number of centuries. From these they took their interpretations of scripture, and upon these they formed their rule of faith and doctrine, and so reduced their respective churches within the bounds of a theological system. The consequence of which was, that every opinion deviating from this system, whatever countenance or support it might have from a different sense of scripture, became a declared heresy.

Hence it came to pass that many Protestants of very different characters and tempers, finding these incroachments on their Christian liberty, and themselves not only excluded from communion with their brethren, but stigmatized with

\* See Mosheim's Compend. View of Eccles. Hist. vol. II. p. 159. and Madaine's note [a].

#### 4 THE CONFESSIONAL.

an invidious name, were provoked to separate from their leaders, and set up for themselves; which many of them did on grounds sufficiently justifiable: whilst others, whose pride, passion, and self-conceit knew no bounds, and whom probably the most reasonable terms of communion would not have restrained, under the pretence of asserting their liberty against these dogmatical chiefs, formed themselves into sects, which afterwards made the most infamous use of it.

That some of these sects were scandals to all religion, and nuisances to all civil society, was but too visible. That they were the offspring of the reformation, was not to be denied. The doctrines which afterwards distinguished the sober and serious Protestant churches, were not yet made public, nor perhaps perfectly settled. They were yet only to be found in the writings of some private doctor, whom his brethren were at liberty to disown, or in catechisms for youth, or directories for ministers within their several departments. — A concurrence of unhappy circumstances, which afforded the Papists a most favourable opportunity of calumniating the whole Protestant body as the maintainers of every heresy, and the abettors of every sedition, which *Europe* had heard of or seen in that generation.

It was to no purpose that these hot-headed irregulars were disowned, and their doctrines reprobated,



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 5

probated, by some of those eminent doctors on whom the credit and success of the Reformation seemed chiefly to depend. These might speak their own sense; but it did not appear by what authority they undertook to answer for the whole body. The nature of the case called for such apologies as these, that their defection from Rome might not fall under a general odium; and it might still be true that all Protestants thought in their hearts, that these indiscreet sectaries spoke out. A suspicion which was not a little confirmed by the leading principle of the most outrageous Anabaptists, which was expressed in the very words of *Luther* himself <sup>b</sup>.

These circumstances laid the Protestants under a necessity of publishing to the whole world explicit confessions of their faith and doctrine, authenticated by formal attestations of the leading members of their respective churches. That of the Protestant Princes of *Germany* led the way; being solemnly tendered to the Emperor *Charles V.* in the diet held at *Ausburgh* in the year 1530. This precedent other Protestant states and churches thought fit to follow on different occasions; and by this means acquitted themselves, at least among all equitable judges, of the scandal of abetting the schismatical and seditious enthusiasts, who about that time infested different

<sup>b</sup> Viz. *A Christian man is master of every thing.* See *Bayle's Dictionary*, art. *Anabaptists*, rem. [A].

## 6 THE CONFESSIONAL.

countries under the pretence of promoting reformation.

These confessions, being laid before the public with this formality, very soon became of more importance than just to serve a present turn. They were solemnly subscribed by the leading men of the several communions on whose behalf they were exhibited, as doctrines by which they would live and die; and were consequently to be defended at all events. And, therefore, to secure the reputation of their uniformity to all succeeding times, an unfeigned assent to the public confession, confirmed either by subscription or a solemn oath, became, in most of the Protestant churches, an indispensable condition of qualifying their pastors for the ministry, and in some of admitting their lay-members to church-communion.

But this expedient, intended to prevent division in particular societies, unhappily proved the means of embroiling different churches one with another, to a very unedifying degree. Some of these confessions, in their zeal to stigmatize the heresies of the most obnoxious sectaries, had made use of terms which no less reprobated the doctrines of their orthodox brethren: the immediate consequence of which was, that several controversies which had arisen among the respective leaders of the Reformation at the beginning, and had been partly composed, and partly suspended,

## THE CONFESSIONAL 7

pended, in regard to their common interest, were now revived, not without much heat and bitterness.

On this incident, the Papists changed their method of attack, and readily took this occasion not only to insult the Reformed on their want of unity, but to turn many doctrines to their own account, which particular men had advanced in conformity to their own confessions.

"The Lutherans and Calvinists," says a very competent judge, "by cherishing some errors of their respective principles, were altogether hindered from rightly answering the 'Papists.' See *Pbanix*, vol. II. p. 315. At length arose the immortal *Chillingworth*, who disclaimed the defence of the Protestant religion, as it lay in systems and confessions, and appealed to the *Bible* only. By this means many cavils were cut off at once, and many confessions of systematical doctors rendered of no use to the Papists at all; who, being well aware of the advantages the Popish cause would lose by this expedient, were accordingly extremely provoked at it. They called it a *novelty* which the Protestants in general would not approve. And it appeared, in the event, that they were not *totally* mistaken. For the application of this rule by a liberal-spirited *English* Prelate on a certain occasion, put another *English* Prelate [bishop *Hars*] extremely out of humour: a Prelate who, when the force of *episcopal* prejudice was out of the way, had ridiculed systematical attachments in a much admired irony, which however owed all its beauty and all its force to this very principle of *Chillingworth*. Mr. *Desmaizeaux* (*Chillingworth's* biographer) thought it necessary to exculpate *Chillingworth* from this Popish charge of *novelty*, and, as it seems to me, has succeeded very ill. He says, "All Protestants had declared "in their confessions, or articles of religion, that the scriptures "are the only rule of faith by which those confessions them-



## 8 THE CONFESSIONAL.

Against these objections the Protestants had a variety of defences, some of which, it must be owned, had more strength as they were applied to the Papists, than merit in themselves. They said, that "a want of unity was no greater reproach to them from the Papists, than it was to the primitive church from the Jews and Heathens, and that the same apologies would serve in both cases." They might have added, that divisions in the Christian church had been for the most part occasioned and fomented by the peremptory decisions and intolerant spirit of those particular doctors, who happened to have the lead for the time being. But this, being too much the case of the Protestants themselves, was not to be insisted on. Some advantage indeed they had in the way of recrimination: but here the Papists found the means to parry the blow; alledging (what indeed was very true) that the most considerable of the points in dispute among them had never been decided *a cathedra*, and so were left open to amicable debate without breach of unity; whereas the doctrines controverted among Protestants were solemnly established in their selves are to be tried." But the question was not, what *all* Protestants had declared, but whether *any* Protestant church had acted conformably to that declaration, and ventured to defend the protestant religion on scripture principles, even at the expence (if so it should fall out) of its own established confession? His answer to bishop Hare's peevishness is much better. *Life of Mr. Gillingworth*, p. 169, and 198.

veral

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 9

veral confessions, and the confessions themselves ratified by oaths, subscriptions, &c. and the belief of them thereby made an indispensable condition of communion <sup>a</sup>.

After much mortifying litigation concerning this want of unity among Protestants, it so happened that the *Belgic* and *Gallican* churches, in the name of themselves and their orthodox sister-churches, thought fit to deny the fact; and, in the year 1581, exhibited what they called *An Harmony of the Confessions* of no less than eleven Protestant churches, which they intended as an ample testimony of the unanimity of Protestants in their principal doctrines, and a full and satisfactory confutation of the Popish calumnies on this head.

This work, however, was not equally approved of by all the churches whose confessions it harmonized. It was even affronted by the church

<sup>a</sup> Thus, with respect to the famous five points concerning which the synod of *Dort* was so untractable, the disputes in the church of *Rome* were bitter enough; but then, "the council of *Trent* had drawn up her decrees, on these heads, with a "neutrality which pleased all, and disoblige none." *Heylin's* Quinquarticular Hist. p. 26. *Grotius* made use of this circumstance in pleading with the magistrates of *Amsterdam* for a toleration of the Remonstrants. "The doctrines disputed in "Holland," said he, "have not been decided by the church "of *Rome*, though she is extremely fond of decisions." *Abridgment of Brandt's History of the Reformation, &c.* by La Roche, p. 344.

## 10 THE CONFESSIONAL.

of England<sup>e</sup>: For, being translated into *English* in the year 1586, Archbishop *Whitgift* (who at that time had the controul of the press) would not allow it to be printed in *London*, and employed his authority likewise to have it suppressed in other places<sup>f</sup>.

There were, indeed, some considerations naturally suggested by the manner in which this work was executed, that would greatly obstruct the good effects expected from it, whether with respect to composing differences among Protestants, or obviating the reproaches of the common adversary.

1. In the first place, the compilers made no mention of the confessions or doctrines of any Protestants, who dissented from the public forms, in those countries where the reformed religion had gained an establishment. They were indeed hardly charitable to such dissenters; censuring

<sup>e</sup> The English confession, exhibited in this *Harmony*, consisted of extracts from Bishop *Jewel's* Apology; a book, in those days, of equal authority with our thirty-nine articles. *Strype's Annals*, vol. I. chap. xxv—xxvii. and *Life of Parker*. p. 179.

<sup>f</sup> The *Harmony* was, however, printed at *Cambridge* that year, notwithstanding *Whitgift's* express prohibition. *Strype*, u. s. vol. III. b. ii. ch. 8. — Mr. *Strype* has not informed us why the Archbishop disallowed the *Harmony*: but the Belgic and Gallican churches having expressed notions of church-government, ceremonies, &c. in some short observations at the end of the book, not very favourable to *Whitgift's* principles, his Grace's distaste for the work is not wholly unaccountable.

with



## THE CONFESSIONALIT 111

with particular severity the authors of the book of *Concord*, which had appeared about this time.

2. All the world knew very well, that not one of these eleven churches would allow any man to minister in it, and hardly perhaps to communicate with it, who should refuse to subscribe the confession of that church, even though he should offer to subscribe or swear to every other system in the collection.

And indeed not without reason, if these censures could have been passed consistently with their design of exemplifying the *Harmony* subsisting among Protestants. By this book of *Concord* (the work of some rigid Lutherans) all those churches were excluded from Christian communion, who would not subscribe it. For which schismatical presumption, the reformed divines of the Low-Countries expostulated sharply with these authors, alledging the scandal and mischief of such peremptory decisions, seeing that the Lutherans and Calvinists differed only about two articles, the Lord's supper, and the two natures of Christ. *Blondel* indeed observes, "that they differed about two articles more, *viz.* "predestination and grace; yet, believing these to be of *no importance*, they [the Low-Country divines] made no mention of them." *La Roche*, u. l. p. 197. Would these divines have believed a prophet who should have foretold, that their successors, in the space of forty years, would certainly treat all who differed from them in these two articles of *no importance*, just as the authors of the *Concord* had treated themselves for differing with them on the other two? Mr. *La Roche* has given a pretty long extract of this Remonstrance of the Low-Country divines, and says, *he inserts it with pleasure, because it is very glorious to those divines.* But to have perfectly atchieved this glory for them, he should have suppressed his account of their persecuting *Hubert Duijsbuis*, because he and his party refused to subscribe their book of *Concord*. See p. 194. 203. 207.

3. The

3. The *short observations* at the end of the *Harmony*, the design of which appears to have been to accommodate the *awkward* expressions in some of these confessions to the orthodox sense of the *Belgic* and *Gallitan* churches (a liberty which the Harmonizers seem to have taken without any sort of commission) plainly shew, that some of these churches were at too great a distance from each other, to be reconciled by any such equivocal expedients.

If the reader would know what was the reputation of these public confessions in other respects, he may be referred to a Lamentation which appeared about thirty years after the publication of this *Harmony*; setting forth, "That these confessions were read by few: that they were hardly to be found in booksellers shops; that men rather chose to provide themselves with the writings of private doctors, and to determine religious matters by any other testimonies, rather than these public forms."

This complaint is taken from the Preface to the *Corpus Confessionum*, printed at Geneva, 1612; the design of which work was to revive the credit of these established formularies, and to recommend them as "authentic tables and standards of the old and primitive faith." For this purpose the confessions of sixteen different churches are here exhibited (not in detached and selected portions, as in the *Harmony*, but) *whole*  
and

and entire, as they were published and acknowledged by the churches to which they respectively belonged<sup>a</sup>.

But, though the professed design of this *Body of Confessions* was to, accommodate divines and students in theology with a commodious and comprehensive view of the whole doctrine of the reformed churches, yet was not the expedient of *harmonizing* their several confessions quite overlooked. But finding, it is likely, that the method taken in the old *Harmony* was justly exceptionable, these Editors contented themselves with referring their readers to a kind of *Synopsis*, where the agreement or harmony of particular churches on different articles is exhibited, without attempting to reconcile them on those articles, concerning which they did not appear to be unanimous.

In this *Synopsis* two things are more especially remarkable.

<sup>a</sup> This, however, the famous *Peter Heylin*, disputing for his doctor's degree at *Oxford* 1633, denied to be true; alleging on the part of the church of *England*, that the first clause of her xxth article, concerning *Church Authority*, was, in this collection, feloniously secreted; appealing to another edition of the Articles, which was on that occasion fetched from a neighbouring bookseller's, and in which the aforesaid clause stood fair and legible. *Vernon's Life of Heylin*, p. 58—61. — See the editors of the *Corpus Confessionum* well vindicated, in *An Historical and Critical Essay on the Thirty-nine Articles*, &c. printed for *Franklin*, 1724, Introduction, p. 22.



## 14 THE CONFESSIONAL.

1. On the article of *Justification* and *Faith*, which is the 5th in this *Index*, the editors observe, that "All the confessions of the [Protestant] churches teach this primary article of the Christian religion with a most holy consent<sup>1</sup>." Does not this note (with which this article alone is honoured) seem to imply a consciousness in the editors, that this was the single article in which all these confessions did agree?

2. According to this Synopsis, there is a dead silence in many (sometimes in the majority) of these confessions, concerning some of the fundamental articles of the Christian religion. Thus only six of them are referred to as speaking of *the providence of God*, in which number (I am loath to observe it) the *English* confession is not reckoned for one; though both *Jewell's* Apology and the thirty-nine Articles are inserted in this collection<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This fact, however, has been lately denied by a vehement advocate for confessions and subscriptions. "The doctrine of justification," says he, "is explained with much greater nicety in the *French* Confession (Article 18th) than it is in ours (Art. 11th); and with such nicety, as occasioned a long dispute between the *French* and some *German* divines, of whom *Piscator* was one." *Church of England vindicated in requiring Subscription*, &c. p. 52. But in truth these disputes were of much longer standing. "*Oflander*, in his Confutation of the book which *Melancthon* wrote against him, observes, that there are twenty several opinions concerning *Justification*, all drawn from the scriptures, by the men only of the *Augustan* Confession." Bp. *Taylor*, *Lib. Proph.* p. 80.

<sup>2</sup> So that a certain right reverend prelate, when he said "that the political system has *nothing* but the *Providence* of  
Again,

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 15

Again, *eleven* of these *sixteen* confessions take no notice of *the Resurrection of the Dead*. I mention these omissions for the sake of those gentlemen, who would have it believed, that churches cannot be sure of the orthodoxy of their ministers in the most important points of the Christian religion, without obliging them to subscribe to their established confessions<sup>1</sup>. How many excellent ministers have there been in different Protestant churches, who never gave those churches any security by way of subscription, that they believed either *a resurrection of the dead*, or *the providence of God*?

It is not at all necessary to carry this disquisition any farther. How particular churches in subsequent times have been embroiled on account of their established confessions, is well known.

In some of these churches the inconveniences of insisting on these tests of orthodoxy have been so great, that they have found it the wisest way either intirely to drop them, or to content themselves with some general declaration, or promise from the minister, that he will not openly oppose

*Government to sustain it against its own madness, from falling into anarchy,* did not contradict any *article or confession* of the church of *England*. Whether he contradicted any thing else, is another question. See the Bishop of *Gloucester's* Sermon before the *House of Lords*, Jan. 30, 1760. Editor's remark.

<sup>1</sup> See Dr *Stebbing's* Rational Enquiry into the proper Methods of supporting Christianity.

them.

## 16 THE CONFESSIONAL.

them. In some churches a formal subscription is still required, even where the inconveniences of it have been no less, and where the most zealous, conscientious, and useful ministers, are still groaning under the burden of such subscriptions. It is chiefly for the sake of such as these, that this disquisition is undertaken, if by any means our present governors (who, if they had had the original work of reformation in their hands, together with the light and experience which the present and past ages have afforded, would, it may be presumed, not have imposed it) may be prevailed with to remove *a yoke which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear*.<sup>m</sup>

But to proceed. Upon this short view of the tendency and effects of established confessions in Protestant churches, the following reflexions seem to be very natural.

1. It was a great misfortune to the Protestants, that their confessions should abound with explications of so many minute points of scholastic theology, which, without stopping one Popish mouth, with respect to the general accusation of *Heresy*, tended so manifestly to narrow their original foundation, and to give their common adversaries so great an advantage, by rendering their breaches among themselves, occasioned by these explications, utterly irreconcilable.

<sup>m</sup> This was written in the year 1755.



## THE CONFESSIONAL 17

2. It was a greater misfortune still, that they should think of establishing these explications as tests of orthodoxy, by requiring their ministers to swear to them, or subscribe them, as an indispensable condition of admitting them to the pastoral office. Had they been contented with a solemn declaration on the part of teachers and pastors, "that they received the scriptures as the word of God, and would instruct the people out of those *only*," leaving them at liberty to

"The learned Professor *Rutherford* seems to apprehend, that "a general profession of believing whatever is contained in the scripture, or of adhering to the doctrine of the apostles, was not likely to satisfy *Timothy* or *Titus*, that they who made it, held fast the faithful word as they had been taught, the mystery of faith in a pure conscience." Charge, p. 7, 8. But this is a case of too great consequence to be determined by likelihoods, which may be just as well grounded on the one side, as on the other; and the learned Professor does nothing for his cause, unless he can prove that *Timothy* and *Titus* were actually dissatisfied with such general profession. In the mean time, has he considered, whither, as he states the case, this likelihood would lead him? For what is the point concerning which *Timothy* and *Titus* would want to be satisfied? It is, according to the Professor, that the ministers they appointed, held the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. But what could satisfy *Timothy* or *Titus* of this, less than a perfect insight into the sincerity of those who made the profession? Now allowing *Timothy* and *Titus* to have had the gift of discerning the hearts and consciences of particular persons for this purpose, how would the learned Professor prove, that church governors of the present times are endowed with the same gift? I do not indeed think it at all necessary to suppose that *Timothy* and *Titus* had a perfect discernment of the hearts and consciences

disown

## 18 THE CONFESSIONAL

disown whatever, after proper examination, they judged inconsistent with them; in all human  
of those whom they admitted to the ministry. I do not think it necessary to suppose that St. Paul himself had this gift in such perfection, as to be able at all times to know what was in the men whom he himself ordained. At least there is no appearance in scripture that he had a *perfect assurance* beforehand of the *sincerity* and *good conscience* of ALL whom he ordained to the ministry. And hence I conclude, that it is *likely* the learned Professor may be under some misapprehension, with respect to the points wherein he supposes *Timothy* and *Titus* would want satisfaction. But here I shall expect to be told, that "the  
"less the apostles and their immediate successors are supposed  
"to be gifted as above, the more occasion they would have to  
"be satisfied of the *sincerity* and *pure conscience* of candidates  
"for the ministry *some other way*, and (what is still more to  
"the Professor's purpose) the more must the present governors  
"of the church be supposed to be upon a level with Paul,  
P and *Timothy*, and *Titus*, in this part of their office." Now  
suppose all this to be granted, it will still be incumbent upon  
the learned Professor to shew, that the *other way* that *Timothy*  
and *Titus* took to satisfy themselves of the *sincerity* and *pure*  
"conscience of the candidates they admitted, was to amplify and  
split the apostolic confession expressed in general terms, into  
particular propositions, and to require from the said candidates  
a subscription or declaration of assent to this amplification.  
For this, according to the learned *Vindicator*, is what the present  
governors of the church pretend they have a right to require,  
and that too for the purpose abovementioned. For the  
learned *Vindicator* tells us, p. 11, that "the governors of the  
"church have a right to examine into, and *ascertain* the faith  
"and doctrines of the candidates for the office of public  
"teaching." But to *ascertain* the faith and doctrines of any  
man is impossible, unless you can, at the same, *ascertain* his  
*sincerity* in professing them. Is this then one of the *general*  
*benefits* of establishing confessions, to give church governors  
probability

probability the interests of Popery would have declined more visibly, and the true ends of reformation have been more speedily, as well as more effectually, promoted.

But, after all, they who are extremely out of temper with the first Reformers, for their mistaken and unseasonable zeal in thus prescribing religious opinions to their fellow-christians, without an insight into the consciences, and to enable them to ascertain the sincerity of the subscribers? Is this method of *lifting the conscience* always to be depended upon? And are not another sort of *Confessions* called *avicular*, much more beneficial for this purpose? And is it *likely* the governors of our own church will thank the learned Professor for *vindicating* to them the exercise of so *presumptuous*, and, at the same time, so *useless* a right. Much less is it *likely* that nothing else would have satisfied *Timothy* and *Titus*; at least it is not likely they should take the Professor's method of obtaining *this* satisfaction, unless it is *likely* that they had not the common sense to know, that he who was *insincere* in professing his faith in the general doctrine of the apostles, might be *equally insincere* in professing his faith, when amplified in a variety of dogmatical propositions. As to the learned Professor's *instances* by which he would establish the *likelihood* of what would or would not satisfy *Timothy* and *Titus*, I must confess I cannot find out how he would apply them, unless he means to build his first *likelihood* on two more; viz. 1. the *likelihood* that St. Paul wrote his epistle to the *Romans* by way of *Confession*, to be subscribed, or otherwise assented to by the candidates ordained by *Timothy* and *Titus*. And, 2. the *likelihood* that the epistle to the *Romans* might be *wrested* before it was written. [Concerning the *respective dates* of the epistle to the *Romans*, and of the first epistle to *Timothy*, see the learned and accurate Dr. Lardner's *Supplement*, &c. vol. II.]



out sufficient warrant of scripture, would do well to consider in what situation they were.

Many abuses in Popery lay open to the observation of men of *all* forms. But it could hardly be credited of a sudden, by men of *any* sort, that the greatest part of that astonishing structure called THE CHURCH, which pretended to have for its foundation the *Apostles* and *Prophets*, and *Christ* himself for its corner stone, should be a mere heap of antichristian rubbish. It is, therefore, no wonder that the most enlightened of our first Protestant Fathers should be afraid of demolishing too much. It was visible, with what props and supports the most eminent saints and doctors of former ages had accommodated the edifice. And these, it might well be imagined, would hardly have been placed there by such venerable hands, without some good reason, and apparent necessity. In those days, nothing was thought to be sufficiently confirmed by scripture-testimonies, without additional vouchers from the ancient worthies of the church: and accordingly *Tertullian*, *Chrysostom*, *Austin*, and *Jerome*, regularly took their places on the same bench of judgment with *Paul*, *Peter*, *James*, and *John*.\*

In process of time some particular persons began to see into this mistake. In our own coun-

\* See the *Catholicus Veterum Consensus*, at the end of the *Corpus Confessionum*.

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 21

try the learned *Cartwright*, in his dispute with Archbishop *Whitgift*, about the year 1573, took the courage to appeal from the authority of the Fathers, and to prescribe them narrower limits in the province of determining religious controversies. How this would be received in those days, might easily be conjectured without particular information. The terms in which *Cartwright* had characterized these venerable doctors, were collected together in a book of *Bancroft's*, and set off with tragical exclamations, as if they had been little less than so much blasphemy.

Some few years after this, *Erasmus Jabonnes*, a schoolmaster at *Antwerp*, took still greater liberties with antiquity. He affirmed, that all the councils which had met, and all the books of the Fathers which had been written since the death of the Apostles, were infested with anti-christian errors, not excepting the famous council of *Nice*. He proposed, therefore, that, in order to a perfect reformation, the new phrases, and new ways of speaking, invented by the Fathers, should be wholly suppressed and laid aside, and all religious propositions expressed, according to the simplicity of Christ and his Apostles. "If any man," says he, "finds himself obliged to use new terms to express the articles of his faith, so that the words of the

*Staple's Life of Whitgift, p. 51.*

Prophets and Apostles are not sufficient for him, that man's doctrines and religion are certainly new, as well as his terms: for otherwise he would easily find, in the scripture, language proper enough to express his notions.<sup>1</sup> But the times were not yet ripe for the toleration of these sentiments; and the poor man, who was hardy enough to venture them with the public, was obliged to fly his country.

From these days, the authority of the Fathers hath continued gradually to decline among all reasonable and consistent Protestants, and more particularly since the publication of Mr. *Daille's* famous book, *De Usu Patrum*, in 1631. But none, that I know of, ventured so far as the schoolmaster of *Antwerp*, till, about thirty years ago, an eminent prelate of our own church, advanced pretty much the same doctrine, concerning the explication of points of faith, by new and unscriptural phrases; for which his Lordship underwent the discipline of several orthodox pens<sup>2</sup>; but without any loss of reputation among those who considered things with less prejudice. For, when it was seen that his Lordship had reduced his antagonists to the disagreeable necessity of holding, that "new and unscriptural words would better fix the sense of

<sup>1</sup> *La Roche Abridgment*, vol. I. p. 218.

<sup>2</sup> See Dr. *Stebbing's* *Rational Enquiry*, p. 25.

"scripture-



"scripture doctrine, than the words of Christ and his Apostles," the clamour subsided. Re-

"Do not they [says Dr. *Rutherford*, *Charge*, p. 10.] who object this to us, [viz. the pretence that new and unscriptural words will better fix the sense of scripture doctrine, than the words of Christ and his Apostles].—Do not they hold, that pastors and teachers, by familiar, clear, and usual forms of speech, can make the sense of scripture more plain to their hearers, than if they were to read it to them in the words which Christ and his Apostles made use of? They must, if they think otherwise, maintain, that all preaching and interpreting of the scriptures is utterly useless, and that the public teachers in Protestant churches have nothing else to do for the instruction of their congregations, but to read the Bible to them." Truly, Mr. Professor, neither *this*, nor *so*, as any one may be satisfied who will take the trouble to read the 39th, 40th, and 41st pages of the former edition of the *Confessional*, to the last of which only you refer, and even in that you might have seen enough to have saved you the trouble of proposing your alternative. However it should seem as if the particulars in that page had not been altogether without their effect upon the learned Professor. For, "he does not miss from the utility of preaching or interpreting the scriptures in Christian assemblies, to infer the utility of established confessions." Why not, if his alternative is rightly stated? But rightly stated it cannot be; unless the cases are *exactly similar*, and that probably he might learn, from that part of the *Confessional* he refers to, was by no means the fact. Well, but what is it he does mean? why, "to remind the opposers of such confessions that what they hold in one case, is *exactly similar* to what they imagine would bring an odium upon us, if we were to say it in the other." Pray, Mr. Professor, do you know any opposers of established confessions who hold that "new and unscriptural words used by preachers in their popular discourses, will better fix the sense of scripture doctrine, than the words of Christ and

sinable men began to see the inconvenience of adopting a principle which would go near to justify the worst impositions of Popery; and the practice of requiring subscription to human ex-

“his Apostles.” Do you know any such opposers who hold that “new and unscriptural words used in such popular discourses,” will fix the sense of scripture doctrine at all? or is either of these propositions in the first member of your alternative? If not, what *they* hold is not *exactly* similar to what, they say, you hold. And if you really do hold it, the *adum* still remains with you. For it is to little purpose to say, “If the sense of scripture may be expressed more *plainly*, why not more *precisely* than in the words of Christ and his Apostles.” The contrast is not between the words *plainly* and *precisely*, but between the words *expressed* and *fixed*. Their difference with you is occasioned by your pretending to fix the sense of scripture by new and unscriptural words in an *established* confession, to the exclusion of the right of private judgment, and not by your endeavouring to make the sense of scripture either *more plain* or *more precise* in a popular discourse, which precludes no man from rejecting the preacher’s sense, if his own judgment leads him to another. And indeed after all this twisting these poor opposers in a *dilemma*, thus the learned Professor appears to understand them. For towards the end of the paragraph (p. 21.) he finds it convenient to say, that “*what are called* new and unscriptural words and expressions are introduced [into confessions] not to fix the sense of scripture doctrines, but to fix the sense in which scripture-expressions are [rather, must be] understood by those, who are candidates for the office of public teaching.” Of which unmeaning distinction he hath heard so much from one of these *perverse* opposers, that it cannot be very pleasant to him to be reminded of it any more. See, *An Examination of Dr. Rutherford’s Vindication*, &c. p. 20. 21.

plications

applications of Christian doctrine, is now considered and treated, by many different sorts of sensible writers, as an unvarnished incroachment on Christian liberty; from which there is reason to believe, all who are capable and willing to examine the subject *without partiality and without hypocrisie*, heartily desire an happy deliverance.

Upon this state of the case, it appears, that the matter of complaint does not affect the *Fountains* of our Reformation by far so much as their *Sons and Successors*. Our first Reformers were beset with their own and other men's prejudices, to a degree that rendered them, in a great measure, incapable of conviction. It was next to impossible to convince them, that their established confessions of faith were unchristian impositions, for which there was no just authority, when they had the early practice of the Christian church to appeal to, long before the tyrannical spirit of *Rome* prevailed. Their veneration for antiquity prevented their seeing that these very precedents were some of the steps by which the papal power ascended to its height, and arrived at the plenitude of its usurpation.

But, since it has been made appear, that some of the Fathers who lived nearest to the times of the Apostles, were greatly mistaken in the sense they put upon some scriptures, with respect to points of no small importance, we have reason to



## 26 THE CONFESSIONAL

hope, that our superiors will no longer bind either themselves or us to an implicit acquiescence in an authority, which may occasionally be extremely inconsistent with our original obligations as Christians; as well as with the distinguishing principles of our profession as Protestants. Whatever expedients of peace and order, their own sort of prudence, or the exigencies of the times they lived in, might suggest to these venerable Fathers, they certainly had no right to prescribe articles of faith to us. And should either they themselves, or any others in their name, pretend to it, we beg leave to remind them of a capital maxim, to the truth of which the Fathers themselves have occasionally born their testimony, namely, *The scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain all things necessary to salvation, and are the sole ground of the faith of a Christian*.\*

Upon this principle, all imposed subscriptions to articles of faith, and religious doctrines, conceived in unscriptural terms, and enforced by human authority, are utterly unwarrantable, and not to be defended but by arguments and pre-

\* For a compendious view of the testimony of the Fathers to the sufficiency of the holy scriptures as a rule of religion, the reader may consult a book intitled, *The Divine Oracle*, written by the learned and candid Mr. John Breckin, printed for Wagh, &c. 1749.

tences,

**THE CONFESSION** 29

rences, highly dishonourable to the sacred writings, and, in many cases, contradictory to the express contents of them.

But, inasmuch as there never yet was any instance of a prosperous usurpation destitute of advocates to lay in for it a claim of right and justice, it would be strange if this matter of subscription, wherein such large and opulent bodies of men are interested, should be left to shift for itself. What the orators of the church have offered on this behalf we shall now briefly consider.

## 28 THE MODERATION ACT

### CHAPTER VIII

#### *The Claim of a Right to establish Confessions, as Tests of Orthodoxy in Protestant Churches; briefly considered.*

THE fundamental position, on which the authority of established confessions in Protestant communions depends, is this. "Every particular church, considered as a society, has a right, as other societies have, to secure its own peace and welfare, by all lawful means; and consequently, to prescribe such terms of communion as appear to be most expedient for the purpose; provided that nothing be required, under this pretence, which is contrary to the word of God, or inconsistent with the liberty of other churches."

To this it has been answered in short, "That, by admitting the principle of self-defence and self-preservation in matters of religion, all the persecutions of the Heathens against the Christians, and even the Popish Inquisition, may be justified." If the church of *England*, for example, has a right to fix her own terms of communion, and, in consequence of that, to secure the obedience of her members by temporal re-

\* See Bishop *Hoadley's* Speech for the Repeal of the Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts, in *Tindal's* Continuation of *Rapin Thoyras*, 8vo. vol. xxvii. p. 237.



## THE COMMISSIONAL

wards and penalties; the church of *Switzerland*, upon the same principles, have an equal right to secure herself by the discipline of an *holy office*, or how otherwise she thinks proper.

"I am at ready to allow," says Dr. *Bellamy*, "in any man can be to contend, that temporal rewards and punishments — are not the proper means of promoting true religion;" referring to *Confessionals*, p. 22, 23. of the former edition. But who thanks him for this concession? The question here is not concerning the means of promoting *true religion*, but concerning the means of fixing the terms of communion, and securing obedience to those terms in a particular church. The Doctor tells us, that "legal emoluments are indeed temporal rewards — but that they are only rewards for doing the work of the ministry." p. 23. But then it is only for doing the work of the ministry, *as our particular church prescribes by the particular church or church-governors where the minister does the work.* Whoever does the work of the ministry in any other way, is not intitled to the legal reward. In this light the rewards are plainly the means of fixing the terms of communion in the particular churches here mentioned, and of securing the obedience of the members of those churches to rewards, to the terms so fixed. And the question here is not concerning the propriety of those means, for those particular ends, but concerning the right that particular churches, or church-governors have, to fix the terms of communion by such means. If the Doctor will prove the right, we will not dispute with him the propriety of promoting temporal ends by temporal means. On the other hand, if the Doctor will allow that church-governors have no right to fix the terms of communion by temporal rewards and punishments, he will tender us something worth our acceptance, and will save us the trouble of inquiring how true religion is promoted by sending honest and conscientious men, who cannot comply with the terms of doing the work, to get their livelihood in some other

The

### 30 THE CONFESSIONAL

The proviso, that "church-ordinances be agreeable to the word of God," will not in the present case help the Protestant churches at all. *Established* confessions, being human compositions, must either be subject to examination by the private judgment of those who profess (as all Protestants do) to make the written word their only rule of religion; or else the church must claim a right of interpreting the Scriptures for all her members, exclusive of the right of private judgment. The former of these principles manifestly precludes the right of the church to establish *any thing* as a condition of Christian communion, without the previous consent of *all* her members; that is to say, of all who, without

may. But here the Doctor hath taken care to guard his concession against any such mistake. "Temporal rewards," says he, "are therefore such means, as the governors of the church have no right to make use of for the attainment of THAT two, to which the society wherein they preside, and the office which they bear in it, are ULTIMATELY referred." Which hinders not, but that church-governors may have a right to make use of such means, for *intermediate* ends, to which the society and the office are *not ultimately* referred.

The late Bishop Conybeare, in his famous Subscription-Sermon, argues from the *consent* required by the Apostles to *their* doctrines, to the *consent* required by succeeding church-governors to *human* articles. This fallacy has been too apt to pass without examination: but the supposition upon which it is supported, is indeed neither more nor less than this, "Scripture truths and the church's explications stand upon the same authority."

that

## THE CONFESSIONAL 31

that condition, would have a right to Christian communion. The latter, indeed, vests the church with a full measure of authority to establish what she pleases; but then it is an authority which every Protestant church most expressly disclaims, and condemns in the church of Rome as an impudent and groundless usurpation.

There is, indeed, nothing more evident, than that every Christian hath a right to search the scriptures; a right which he cannot transfer, either to any church, or to any single person, because it is his indispensable duty to exercise it personally for himself. And if it is his duty to search, it must also be his duty to determine for himself; and, if he finds just cause, to dissent from any or all the human establishments upon earth.

A Honest old Rogers, by the church which hath authority in controversies of faith, understands not only the aggregate body, but every member of sound judgment in the same. Cath. Doct. Art. xx. Propos. 3. well knowing that every intelligent Christian, with the scriptures before him, is, upon Protestant principles, and in decrees of this nature, a church to himself. This leaves no room for Bishop Burnet's distinction between an infallible authority, and an authority of order, which last, he faintly insinuates, might be safely intrusted with the body of the clergy. But his Lordship, to do him justice, qualifies this with a proviso, that this body is properly disposed for the province.—Perhaps it might be as difficult to find such a body of men, as to find single persons without mistakes. See Bishop Burnet's Exposition, fol. p. 195.



Some writers on this subject discover an inclination to deny the right of private judgment in every case where it is opposed to church authority. These we leave to reconcile their principles with their separation from Rome. Others attempt by various arguments (some of which will occur hereafter) to prove that the authority of the church to frame and settle confessions of faith and doctrine for all her members, is perfectly consistent with the rights of private judgment. But, to discover the fallacy of all arguments to this purpose, it is only necessary to consider, that, if this supposed authority was vigorously exerted, and applied in all cases (as it ought to be, if the authority is real) and if, on the other hand, the people were diligent and careful in searching the scriptures every one for himself (as all Protestants agree they ought to do) the consequence would most probably be, that the far greater part of honest and sensible Christians would be excluded from the communion of every church which has an established confession. For where is there one

<sup>a</sup> A certain writer, in the *Daily Gazette* of Sept. 30. 1766. pronounces, that "the Author of the *Confessional*, cannot, consistently with his principles, be a member of any established church." Whether the hint was taken from this passage, or some other, is not any great matter. The question is, how far the said Author is within the reach of this fulminating censure? or what the consequence must be if he falls under it? He," says Lord Clarendon, "who will profess all the opinions held by the most ancient fathers, and observe all that

of these confessions which does not contain some very material decisions, from which an intelligent Christian, who hath duly examined the scriptures,

"was practised in the primitive times, cannot be of the communion of any one church in the world." *Essays*, fol. 1727.

p. 226. As this zealous brother in the *Gazette*, may probably be one of those who estimate orthodoxy by an agreement with *Fathers* and *Times*, one would wish to know what abatements in *profession* and *practice* he thinks proper to make, in order to qualify himself to be a member of the established church with which he communicates? An explicit declaration on this head, by so strenuous an adherent to *establishments*, would be both edifying and entertaining. The Author of the *Confessional*, on his part, declares, without hesitation, that he knows no *Fathers* of the Christian church *more ancient* than the Apostles of Christ, nor any times *more primitive* than those in which they preached and wrote. Whatsoever they taught he professes cordially to believe, and how much soever he may be *soured* for adhering to *scripture-precedents*, is desirous to observe, whatsoever was practised in the first Christian churches settled by those venerable Fathers, so far as he can discover it in the scriptures. And if any established church should disown him for a member, upon account of his not believing or not practising more or less than he finds in those scriptures, he apprehends, the fault will, in the event, be found, not in himself, but in the church or churches, who reject one whom the Apostles of Christ would not have rejected. "J'avoue que je suis de ceux qui sont pour le christianisme apostolique, ou pour celui qu'on peut tirer de leurs écrits, en propres termes, ou par des conséquences nécessaires, lorsqu'il s'agit d'un dogme essentiel," says Mr. *Le Clerc*. *Bibl. Choisie*, tom. 21. p. 15. And so say I too; reserving to myself, however, the privilege of drawing these necessary consequences for my own use, without being obliged to trust to the *logic* of Fathers of more modern times.

may not reasonably *dissent*? I had almost said, where is there one of them to which a knowing and thinking Christian can *assent* in all points, without prostituting his understanding and conscience to the doctrines and commandments of men? — I say, a *knowing* and *thinking* Christian; for he must have considered the case before us very superficially, who does not perceive, that the adherence of such numbers to the peculiar doctrines of the church from which they receive their denomination, and even to some doctrines common to the creeds and confessions of all churches, which call themselves orthodox, is owing to their ignorance, their indolence, their secularity, or the early prejudices of education, which are known to be the unhappy circumstances of the common people, all over the Christian world.

Some zealous men have, indeed, inferred a necessity for confessions, and consequently an authority in the church to establish them, from these very indispositions and incapacities of the people to examine and judge for themselves. But, tho' this is perhaps the best plea of *right* which the church has to alledge, yet wiser and cooler advocates for confessions chuse not to abide by an argument, which would equally vindicate the church of *Rome* with respect to many of her impositions. Not to mention, that these *indispositions* and *incapacities* in the clergy would be but an awkward reason



reason for making *their* assent and subscription to confessions an indispensable condition of being admitted into the church as *teachers*.

These prudent gentlemen, therefore, seem inclined to acquit the laity of all concern with established confessions, and to confine their authority to the clergy; insomuch that (if I understand some of our modern casuists on this subject) a layman, if he can get over his own scruples, may pray, hear the word, and even communicate with what Protestant church he pleases\*. If

\* The opinions, indeed, of these modern divines on this article are not uniform. Many worthy ministers of several denominations, whose catholic principles would incline them to reject no man who should attend their communions with decency and reverence, may still think themselves obliged (and very reasonably) to have respect to the sense of the congregation where they constantly officiate. Others, I know, think differently, and this occasions a variety in practice. See *Whiston's Memoirs*, vol. II. p. 485. and *Killingworth's Examination of Dr. Foster's Sermon on Catholic Communion*.—"It seems to me," says Mr. *La Roche*, "that Protestants and Catholics should not discourage those heterodox men who come to their altars." *Abridgment*, vol. II. p. 613. And so it seems to me too, provided such heterodox men come there of choice, solely for a religious end, and behave reverently and decently when they are there. But, when Mr. *La Roche* adds, "The church of *England* is the wisest national church in the world upon this head," he refers to a very different case, wherein indeed the wisdom of the church had no share. Most of the bishops, and among them the two archbishops *Wake* and *Darvel*, opposed the repeal of the act against *occasional* conformity with all their strength: An act which, all the world

D

this

36 THE CONFESSIONAL.

this be really true, we have reason to be thankful for better times; for undoubtedly some of us have remembered worse.

But, however this matter might turn out upon the experiment, certain it is, that, in so far as the laity are allowed not to be bound by these church confessions, the point of *right* to establish them as tests of orthodoxy is fairly given up, as well for the clergy as the laity; since whatever rule is sufficient to direct the faith and practice of the

knows, discouraged heterodox men from coming to our altars. *Tindal's Contin.* 8vo. vol. XXVII. p. 231—241. And to admit these heterodox men to our altars, without previously revoking their *wicked errors*, is against our canon-law to this hour. In the mean time, the *Test Act* brings many men to our altars (and it is well if not some infidels among them) who would never come there of choice, or on a religious account. In the late altercations concerning the bill for naturalizing the *Jews*, mention was made of some *Jews* in K. *William's* reign, who actually came to our *Christian* altars to qualify themselves for naturalization. *Lond. Mag.* for July 1753. p. 306. We are apt to value ourselves mightily on the respect which foreign Protestants express for our church: but there are cases where this respect does us no honour. Such a compliment as this of Mr. *La Roche* is enough to put a sensible Church-of-England-man, who knows the true state of the case, out of countenance. A law inducing men to profess, by a solemn act, that their religious opinions are what they really are not, is no mark either of wisdom or Christian charity in *any* church. But this point has been so thoroughly discussed and cleared up by the late Bishop of *Winchester*, that there is no danger it should ever be thrown into confusion again; though, more lately, some ingenious pains have been taken that way, *viz.* in the Book of Alliance between Church and State, written by another Bishop.

layman,

layman, must likewise be sufficient to direct the teaching of the clergyman, unless the clergyman may be obliged to teach doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe or to practise <sup>f</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> "As if," saith Dr. *Rutherford*, "the governors of the church, because they do not bind the laity to subscribe to the established confession, did not understand them to be bound in conscience, as much as the clergy, to believe and practise what is contained in it," p. 15. And yet it seems that after the governors of the church have set forth this confession as a rule to direct the faith and practice of the laity, they leave every man to judge and determine for himself, whether it is such a one as he ought to assent to, or not."

That is to say, *every layman*; for the clergyman, having already assented to this confession, is *not* left thus to judge and determine for himself. Now as the layman is left thus to judge and determine to the end of his life, without any requisition on the part of church-governors, either to subscribe or declare his assent to the confession, how can these governors possibly understand that the *layman* is as much bound in conscience to believe and practise what is contained in the confession, as the *clergyman* who hath solemnly subscribed, and declared his assent to it? In truth, the governors of the church understand no such thing; and Dr. *Rutherford* himself shall, upon this occasion, be my voucher. For, strange as it may appear, in these very words does he conclude the paragraph.

"Of the laity they do not require this subscription, because after they have taken care that these should be duly instructed, *their duty extends no farther, and therefore gives them no right to know* what determination the private judgment of *any one of this rank may have led him to.*" But it is upon this very *determination* which church-governors have *no right to know*, that the obligation of the layman's conscience depends. Whence it appears, that church-governors, whose



### 38 THE CONFESSIONAL.

But, say some men, "if there be really an "*expedience* and *utility* in these public formularies "called Confessions of faith, we may well infer a "right to establish them, although concerning "such right the scripture should be silent. Many "things relating to public worship, and public "edification, must be left to the prudence and "discretion of church-governors for the time "being; and if confessions are manifestly useful "and expedient for the church, there must be an "authority lodged somewhere to prepare and in- "force them."

The *expediency* and *utility* of confessions will be very particularly considered in the next chapter; for which reason I shall forbear to say any thing farther to this plea at present, save only a word or two concerning this method of arguing from the *probable expedience* or utility of any thing in religion to a right or authority to employ or introduce it.

duty is limited as above, do not pretend to understand to *what* the layman is or is not bound in conscience with respect to their established confession; and if they understand the clergyman, upon account of his subscribing the confession, to be bound in conscience to believe and practise what is contained in it, it will follow, that "the clergyman may be obliged to teach "doctrines, which the layman is not obliged either to believe "or practise." For *ex hypothesi* the established confession is the rule for the clergyman's *doctrinal* teaching, from which he may not depart on the peril of being held *unsound* by his governors.

No

No wise man, who hath duly considered the genius and design of the Christian religion, will look for much utility or expedience, where the church or church-governors go beyond their *plain commission*. And, whatever may be left to the prudence and discretion of church-governors, there is *so much more* left to the conscience of every Christian in his personal capacity, that it greatly behoves such governors to beware they inroach not on a province which is without their limits. This consideration has always disposed me to reason in a manner just contrary to these gentlemen, namely, from the authority to the utility of religious measures. My opinion is, that where the methods of promoting christianity are matter of scripture-precept, or plainly recommended by scripture-precedents, there such methods should be strictly followed and adhered to, even though the *expedience* of them should not be very evident *a priori*°. We can have no pre-

z “When those,” saith Dr. *Rutherford*, “who allow  
“that ‘such methods of promoting Christianity as are plainly  
“recommended by scripture-precedents ought to be strictly  
“followed,’ complain of it as an unwarrantable encroachment  
“on Christian liberty, that subscriptions should be required  
“to be made to religious propositions expressed in any other  
“than scripture-language, one is apt to suspect, that by a  
“scripture precedent they mean a precedent of a confession re-  
“corded in the scriptures, and expressed there in unscriptural  
“words. But without looking for such inconsistencies.”—  
*This method of looking for inconsistencies, is so very new, that I*

40 THE CONFESSIONAL.

tence of *right* or *authority* to alter such methods for others seemingly more expedient, while so

cannot readily find a class for it among the current arts of controversy. May I venture to call it a piece of *Professorship* where *an aptness to suspect* is a necessary part of the calling, lest the unwary Moderator should be surprised into inconvenient concessions by the insidious colourings of heretical pravity, *as hath sometimes been the case*. The Professor refers to Confessional, p. 29. 19. The thing complained of p. 19. of the former edition, as "an unwarrantable encroachment on Christian liberty," is, "the practice of requiring subscriptions to human explications of Christian doctrine." Are *scripture-precedents* there called for to justify the practice? Or are they *there* so much as mentioned? Nothing like it. But *scripture-precedents in general* happen to be recommended at the distance of ten pages, as the safest for church-governors to follow in all cases; and why shall not a *professed* disputant have the privilege of tacking things together to make his own ends meet, and to fix any absurdity upon his opponent that may subserve his own argument? But, however, we have no reason to complain of the learned Professor for declining to gratify even our inconsistent demands, since he does his best endeavour to give us a *scripture-precedent* for requiring subscription or declaration of assent to a confession expressed in *unscriptural words*. "But," says he, "*without looking for such inconsistencies*, it is enough for us to find, that St. Paul, when he commanded Timothy and Titus to examine into the faith of all those whom they should receive into the ministry, gave them no directions to use only scripture language." Which is to suppose, that when the epistles to Timothy and Titus were written, the other scriptures of the N. T. were extant, and collected together as we now have them; otherwise the *no directions* of St. Paul might be owing to the want of a complete rule whereby to direct the examination of candidates. It is not *enough*, therefore, for the Professor's purpose to find these *no directions*,  
very



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 41

very much of the effect of religion, or, in other words, of its utility, is made by our blessed Master to depend on the inward frame of every man's heart, into which ordinary church-governors can have no farther discernment than other men. On this account, those means of edification, public or

till he hath proved that the scriptures of the New Testament were in the hands of *Timothy* and *Titus* in the circumstances above mentioned. But for once let us suppose they were, and how then? Why then, "we may reasonably conclude that "*Timothy* and *Titus* were left at liberty to propose their questions in any words that would ascertain *their* meaning." Considering the use the learned Professor proposes to make of this *scripture precedent*, I should think he hath expressed himself here a little *unwarily*. Would he have it understood that *Timothy* and *Titus* were left at liberty to propose their questions in any words which would ascertain a meaning of *their own*, different from the meaning of the scriptures, which they are supposed to have had in their hands? And would he infer from hence that church-governors of the present times are left at the *same* liberty? No, I will not suffer myself to *suspect* that the learned Professor, adventurous as he is, would go *this length* in vindication of *any protestant church*. I will, therefore, suppose this to be a slip of his pen, and that he meant to say, that *Timothy* and *Titus* were left at liberty to propose their questions in any words that would *ascertain the meaning*, or, what is the same thing, *fix the sense* of the scriptures they had in their hands. And yet I know not how far I should be right in this modification of the Professor's expression, or how far he would think fit to own it. For on the opposite page he tells us, that "new and unscriptural words and expressions were introduced by church-governors, not to *fix the sense* (in other words, to *ascertain the meaning*) of scripture-doctrines, but to *fix the sense* — of something else." And so much for *inconsistencies*.

42 THE CONFESSIONAL.

private, will always, in my esteem, bid the fairest for success, which are the truest copies of apostolic originals. Notions of expedience in any thing more than these, when there is nothing to judge by but superficial appearances, have frequently led men to interfere very unseasonably with the dictates of other mens consciences; and no greater mischief has ever been occasioned by any thing in the Christian church, than by those very expedients of human prudence, from which the best effects have been expected.

Among other instances which might be given to verify this observation, we have one at home, in which all those who are called to the ministry are too nearly concerned not to be capable judges. After some progress had been made in the reformation of the church of *England*, it was thought to be a great defect, that a public confession of faith and doctrine should still be wanting <sup>a</sup>. To supply this defect, the *Articles of Religion* were compiled, published, and enjoined to be subscribed. These Articles (with some alterations which passed in those days for improvements) are still subscribed by, at least, one hundred of our ministers every year. That above one fifth of this number do not subscribe or assent to these Articles, in one uniform sense, we have great reason to believe; and yet the avowed purpose of this general subscription is *to prevent diversity of*

<sup>a</sup> *Burnet's Hist. Reform.* vol. II. p. 166. and vol. III. p. 210.  
opinions.

*opinions.* And, indeed, considering to what sorts of men this test is made indispensable, it is, I think, as much as can be expected, if another fifth subscribe them in *any* sense, but the sense they have of wanting preferment in the church, if they should not.

It is true, all these persons minister in their several congregations by one common form, framed, for the general, on the model of the confession they have subscribed; and so far all has a fair and honest appearance, and, while they keep their thoughts to themselves, is consistent enough. But no sooner are many of them at liberty to deliver their own or other men's sentiments from the pulpit, but the established system is laid aside, or, perhaps, if it comes in their way, quite overset<sup>1</sup>, and many things written and uttered with all freedom, by different persons, equally irreconcilable to each other, as well as to the orthodox confession.

What now is the *utility* or *expedience* in this affair of subscription, which will atone for the scandal brought upon the cause of Christianity by this unscriptural article of church discipline?

<sup>1</sup> "All those who write and preach in this nation are not 'her [the church of *England's*] sons, any more than they of 'Geneva, or Scotland, or New England, are,'" says Bishop *Russ*, *Defence of Origen*, &c. *Phoenix*, vol. I. p. 83. So that this is no new complaint. See likewise Dr. *Hartley's* *Observations on Man*, vol. II. p. 354. and a remarkable instance in *A Defence of the Essay on Spirit*, p. 24.



#### 44 THE CONFESSIONAL.

To say nothing of the distress of many a conscientious minister under the unhappy dilemma of, *subscribe or starve* <sup>k</sup>; is it possible that the igno-

<sup>k</sup> "Take away the legal emoluments of the ministry," says Dr. *Rutherford*, "and though you leave subscriptions, these *useful*" [he should have added *conscientious*] "ministers, as they are called, will make no complaint of their being under the dilemma of either subscribing to our articles, or of not enjoying the liberty of preaching the gospel." *Vindication*, p. 5. A most uncharitable judgment, and, as it happens, contradicted by notorious matter of fact. It is well known, that the dissenting clergy are excluded from the legal emoluments of the ministry, and are not legally at liberty to preach the gospel, but upon condition of their subscribing the major part of our articles. In the year 1719, Mr. *James Pierce* and Mr. *Joseph Hallet junior*, of *Exeter*, were shut out of their pulpits, as Mr. *Pierce* expresses it, for refusing to subscribe the first article of the church of *England*. *Western Inquisition*, p. 70. 147. 148. About the same time, others of their brethren were excluded from, and some of them by, their respective congregations, for the same cause. And among these, some were obliged to betake themselves to secular employments. *Ibid.* p. 158. 159. These, and several others which happened in different places, are cases in point against Dr. *Rutherford*. I have been informed upon good authority, that the late Dr. *Foster* never subscribed the articles, and that, when some distant attempts were made by a great churchman of those times to enforce a compliance with the toleration-act upon all the dissenting clergy, he bore a noble and spirited testimony, which shewed at least that secular hopes or fears were no part of the motives upon which he exercised his ministry. I could augment this list pretty considerably, by adding others of different denominations within my own knowledge, were this a proper place for information of that kind. Far be it from me to set the usefulness of dissenters upon an equal footing with the use-  
rance,

rance, the indolence, or the insincerity of the rest should not make considerable impressions,

*fulness* of a learned and laborious Professor in a celebrated university; but I cannot help expressing my apprehensions, that some of the works of *Pierce, Hallet, and Foster* will be inquired after and read with edification, long after the *Confessional*, and this elaborate confutation of it, are buried in oblivion. If such then is the self-denial of dissenters, who pass with us for *mistaken* men in the greater part of their system, shall we say, or even suppose, that legal emoluments have a stronger bias upon the *more enlightened* minds of the members of the establishment? or will the Professor say, that none of the established clergy have *any* scruples about subscription at all?—"Nor," continues the learned Professor, "is the case fairly stated in the present situation of things. Subscription is no *new* test of our opinions, which is then first proposed to us when we are already in the ministry, and are going to be admitted to an ecclesiastical benefice; for we cannot be admitted to the lowest order of ministers without it." No, Mr. Professor, nor without a *competent stipend*, on the peril of the candidate's being thrown on the bishop who ordains him, *for a maintenance with all things necessary, till he do prefer him to some ecclesiastical living.* Canon xxxiii. In what respect then is the case unfairly stated? "Why they who are concerned in this dilemma should not be called *ministers*." Very well; we will not stand for small matters. We will call them *men*; and then the state of the case will stand thus. "Many an useful, conscientious *man*, after having spent his time and his fortune among Doctors and Professors, in fitting himself for the ministry, finds, in the twenty-third of his life, such conditions prescribed, as he cannot in conscience comply with, and that he is reduced to the unhappy dilemma of *subscribing at all adventures, or starving.*" "No," says the Professor, "he may apply himself to some other way of getting a livelihood." But may it not be somewhat of the both

## 46 THE CONFSSIONAL

both upon the friends and enemies of revelation?  
Suppose the herd of mankind were too much

latest when his money is gone, and the man himself perhaps under canonical correction for his *wicked errors*. But, *courage!* Things are not quite so desperate. The mere carcase of an indigent heretic in durance, would not, *in the present situation of things*, pay the expence of a *significavit*, and the man, being left at large, must be poor indeed if he cannot purchase a spade and a pickax.——An able-bodied man may always find work upon the turnpike roads. At length, indeed, the Professor owns “there have been some ministers who have “scrupled to repeat the subscription, and have therefore continued without any ecclesiastical preferment till their scruples “were removed, or perhaps as long as they lived. But,” adds the humane Professor, “the number has been too small “for any one to pretend that it would be reasonable for the “sake of *such as these* to give up the general benefit proposed “by subscriptions.” *Such as these*; that is to say, *useful and conscientious* ministers. For they are *such as these* that the *Confessional* speaks of. Shall we say then, that it is not only the *smallness of the number*, but the *sort of men*, which makes it *unreasonable* to give up the general benefit proposed by subscriptions? But to have given its proper weight to his argument, the learned Professor should have said, “the general “benefit *actually obtained* by subscriptions.” They who first required subscriptions, might *propose* a general benefit, which has never been *obtained*. To make us judges of this, the learned Professor should have been particular in explaining in what this *general benefit* consists? If subscription is considered in the light of a *test* whereby the soundness of the candidate in faith and doctrine is ascertained, and if this be the general benefit proposed by it, I should apprehend, from the *latitude* allowed by other defenders of subscription, that this *benefit* is so far from being *general*, that it never can be obtained from any subscriber who takes advantage of the latitude allowed by employed



employed in other business to turn their attention of themselves to remarks of this nature, yet the zeal and eagerness of the litigants to expose this prevarication on either side, by casting their subscriptions in each other's teeth, will not suffer the most incurious mortal to be long uninformed of it, if he should only look into some of the commonest books of controversy for his mere amusement.

The sum of the whole matter then is this. Lodge your church-authority in what hands you will, and limit it with whatever restrictions you think proper, you cannot assert to it a right of deciding in controversies of faith and doctrine, or, in other words, a right to require assent to a *these defenders*. And they who do not take this advantage are, perhaps, still fewer in number than they who scruple to subscribe at all. Where then would be the *unreasonableness* of giving up what cannot be obtained, for the sake of useful and conscientious men, though ever so few? Indeed if the *general benefit* of subscriptions is the letting a number of men into a *way of getting a livelihood* (the only *obvious* alternative hinted at) perhaps the *general benefit proposed*, and the *general benefit obtained*, may be nearly equal: and then the *sort of men* who object to subscriptions, will be out of the question. For then the *equitable* decision of the case will depend, not upon the reasonableness of having some regard and compassion for useful and conscientious ministers, or upon the reasonableness of the scruples which with-hold them from subscribing, but upon the reasonableness of accommodating the numbers of those who *have no scruples*, at the expence of those who *have* scruples.

## 48 THE CONFESSIONAL.

certain sense of scripture, exclusive of other senses, without an unwarrantable interference with those rights of private judgment which are manifestly secured to every individual by the scriptural terms of Christian liberty, and thereby contradicting the original principles of the Protestant reformation<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "But can any one imagine, says Dr. Rutherford, that "Christ and his Apostles *purposely* delivered their doctrines in "such expressions as would admit of different interpretations, "that each particular person might interpret them for himself, "and might, in determining what his faith should be, have a "variety to choose out of?" p. 12. I suppose, the learned Professor will think *each particular person* safe enough in *imagining* what his *church-governors* have *imagined* before him. "Nor are these *changes of sense*, says the reverend Dr. Powell, "unusual even in our most solemn forms. The passages of the "Psalms or other scriptures, which make a part of our daily "devotions, cannot always be applied by every christian as "they were by the writers." *Sermon in Defence of Subscription*, p. 14. Here, we see, *change of application*, when these instances occur, implies *change of sense*. Whether the writers of these passages *purposely* delivered them in such expressions as would admit of different interpretations, I leave to be discussed by these two eminent Doctors. If they did, I cannot see why each particular person should not, upon protestant principles, have as much right to choose an interpretation for himself, as his church-governors have to choose one for him. If they did not, I am afraid it will follow that every christian who makes use of these solemn forms, and cannot apply the passages of scripture in them, as the writers of those passages applied them, has been *purposely* led by those who composed and authorized these forms, into a *misapplication* of scripture. But to answer the Professor's question directly. No body that I know of does imagine, that

This

This point being settled, the squabbles among particular churches concerning their supposed li-

this was the design of Christ and his Apostles; and what then? Why then, "the terms which secure to each christian the right of interpreting them [the discourses or writings of Christ and his Apostles] for himself, cannot *without impropriety* be called *the scriptural terms of christian liberty*: they should rather be called *the terms of an accidental liberty* which belongs to christians in their present situation." And so all this parade of objection ends in an *impropriety*! and well it is no worse. However, if it is an impropriety, the author of the *Confessional* was led into it by an authority equal at least to that of Dr. Rutherford, even the authority of the great Chillingworth, whose words are these: "This vain conceit that we can speak of the things of God better than in the words of God; this deifying our own interpretations, and forcing them upon others; *This restraining the word of GOD from that latitude and generality, and the understandings of men from THAT LIBERTY WHEREIN CHRIST AND HIS APOSTLES LEFT THEM*, is and hath been the only fountain of all the schisms in the church, and is that which makes them immortal." Chap. iv. sect. 16. The Professor however, having left this small cavil to take its chance, returns to the true question, "Whether this liberty is not unwarrantably interfered with by requiring christians to *assent* to any certain sense of scripture, where they are persuaded it will admit of other senses, and have a right to judge for themselves which is the true one? The answer, says the Professor, is obvious. No christian is required to *subscribe* to such confessions as I am speaking of, who is not in his own private judgment convinced that they are agreeable to the word of God." p. 13. I would not willingly suspect the learned Professor of attempting to evade the force of the question, under the cover of the word *subscribe*. The term in the question is *assent*; and if it is not required of those christians, who are not required to *subscribe*, to *assent* to



## 50 THE CONFSSIONAL

berly within their respective departments (in so far as these confessions come in question) is about the confession, how can the governors of the church possibly understand those christians who *do not* subscribe the confession, to be bound in conscience to *believe* what is contained in it, as much as they who *do* subscribe it, as the Professor asserts in the very next page? Can any man be understood to be bound in conscience to *believe* a proposition, to which he is not required to *assent*? Well, but there are christians of a certain class, who are required both to *assent* and *subscribe* to a certain sense of scripture expressed in such confessions as the Professor is speaking of. What right have church-governors to interfere with the private judgment of *these*, any more than with the private judgment of *any other* christians? The Professor answers, "These confessions are designed to be tests by which the governors of the church *may find out*, whether they who desire to be appointed pastors and teachers, *assent* to the faith and doctrines contained in them or not." p. 13. But what is all this to the point of *right* thus to interfere? where is the *warrant* of these church-governors to *find this out*? If the faith and doctrines contained in these confessions are different from the faith and doctrines contained in the scriptures, the governors of the church can have no *scriptural* warrant for imposing any such test. If the faith and doctrines contained in these confessions, are the same with the faith and doctrines contained in the scriptures, the requiring an assent to the latter will *enable* the governors of the church to *find out* as much to the full as they are *warranted* to find out. Be it here observed, that the right of *interfering* is wholly built upon the right of *finding out* what, unless subscription to the confession is an *infallible test*, they never can find out. For it is not a clear case that *any one* who subscribes the confession assents to *every thing* contained in it. And what is the consequence if he does not? Why truly "he frustrates the purpose for which confessions were established. And is not this *frustration* a possible case? Is it not a very common case? Is it not what subscribers of different complexions object to each other on various occasions with all freedom? And  
a thing

a thing of nought. For none of them having a right to establish or to prescribe such doctrinal confessions for the whole body, it is matter of great indifference (setting aside the scandal of it) in what degree they exclude or make room for one another.

But, to give this matter a little consideration with respect to the present effects of it upon Christian societies, let us suppose that Protestant churches *have* such a right each within its own confines: The question is, how shall one church exercise this right, without encroaching on the right of another? Upon the genuine grounds of separation from the church of *Rome*, all particular churches are co-ordinate<sup>m</sup>; they have all the same right in an equal degree; and the decisions of one are, in point of authority, upon the very

are not the governors of the church most highly obliged to the learned Professor for pleading so strenuously for their right to be the dupes of their own policy?

<sup>m</sup> The Protestant churches every where set up on this principle; what regard they have paid to it since, is another affair. One remarkable instance may be worth mentioning. "The refugees," says Mr. *La Roche*, "who were driven out of the *Low-Countries* by the Duke of *Alva* in the year 1571, held a synod at *Emden*, and their first canon was, that no church should have dominion over another church." And, to testify their sincerity herein, they put the *French* and *Dutch* confessions upon the same footing, by subscribing them both. *Abridgment*, vol. I. p. 141. But N. B. The Dutch Confession was not then established, and these were poor friendless refugees. 'Tis pity but some of them had lived to see how sacredly this canon of *Emden* was observed in the synod of *Dort*.

E

same

## 52 THE CONFESSIONAL.

same level with those of another. This being so, I do not see how it is possible for any church to *exercise* this right in those instances where she establishes doctrines *peculiar to herself*, and inconsistent with the doctrines of other churches, without abridging those churches of their right to establish their own doctrines. No church can have a *right* to establish any doctrines but upon the supposition that they are *true*. If the doctrines established in one church are *true*, the contrary doctrines established in another church must be *false*; and, I presume, no church will contend for a *right* to establish *false* doctrines <sup>n</sup>.

<sup>n</sup> "A very common distinction, says Dr. Rutherford, will clear up this matter. No church has a right to establish, as "no individual has a right to hold, false doctrines as false "doctrines. But if either a protestant church, or an individual "protestant, should, after due consideration, be persuaded that "any doctrines are true, which in reality are false, either the "right of a church, acting under this persuasion, to provide for "and secure the public teaching of these doctrines, *which in* "the present question is all that we mean by a right to establish "them, must be well founded, or an individual, acting under "the same persuasion, can have no right to hold them." Charge, p. 17. How much is a controversial writer at his ease, when he takes the liberty to make his own case, and to apply to it his own distinctions! And is this in truth ALL that the author of the *Confessional* means by a right to establish these doctrines? Does he not plainly mean a right pretended to in any one protestant church to establish its *peculiar* doctrines, as standards of orthodoxy for the *whole body* of Protestants? Does he not plainly mean such an establishment as *excludes* or *reprobates* other churches which do not hold the same doctrines? Does he not plainly oppose to this pretended right, the prin- And



And indeed, whatever may be pretended, this is the very footing upon which all Protestant churches have, occasionally, treated the churches that differed from them, and from whence the conclusion to a disinterested bystander is obvious; namely, that, in consequence of these co-ordinate powers, none of them had a right to establish any doctrines, but with the unanimous consent of all the rest.

ciple of *co ordination*, on which all protestant churches at first set up, and by which they renounced, each for itself, all *dominion* over any other church? And has he not explained himself beyond the possibility of being mistaken by any reader of common sense and common attention, by considering the case of *more than one protestant church in one protestant state*? And shall he after this be supposed to mean no more by a right to establish doctrines, than "a right in a particular church to provide for and secure the public teaching of such doctrines as she holds within her own department?" But, one word more with the learned Professor. While he was looking for this distinction, hath he not manifestly deserted his own church-system? He forgets, I'm afraid, upon this occasion, that *his* particular churches are not like Mr. Locke's *voluntary societies*, where the consent of *all* the members must be had in order to establish *any* thing, and in that respect may each of them be compared to an individual Protestant with sufficient propriety. Whereas the Professor's particular churches have *Rulers* and *Governors* appointed under Christ, and invested with a *right* independent of the lay-members, to establish whatsoever they may judge to be expedient for them. He hath therefore brought himself under a necessity either of divesting *his* church-governors of their *right*, or of dropping the analogy between a particular protestant church and a protestant individual, unless indeed it is such an individual as is in the arms of a nurse.

It is true, Protestants of one state or country have been tender of condemning the confession of those of another, by any public sentence; and reason good; their powers are limited by their situation, and extend not beyond their own departments, nor would their censures be regarded elsewhere. But what instance is there upon record, where this *liberty* has been allowed (as the co-ordinate principle manifestly requires it should be) to more than *one* church in the *same* Protestant state? Every party, in every Protestant state, has, by turns, made some attempts to have their religious tenets established by public authority. In every state, some *one* party has succeeded; and having succeeded, imposes its own confession upon all the rest; excluding all dissenters from more or fewer of the common privileges of citizens, in proportion as the civil magistrate is more or less in the mood to vindicate, or distinguish, the system he thinks fit to espouse.

This has been the case, at different periods, with different churches in the same country. And (what is chiefly remarkable to our present purpose) the party defeated has constantly exclaimed against the practice, as an unreasonable, unchristian, and wicked tyranny; — the very practice which they themselves, in their prosperity, endeavoured to support by every claim of right,  
and

and to defend by every argument of utility and expedience °.

Of this many remarkable examples might be given, in the complaints of church-men of different denominations in adversity; who, in the day of their exaltation, had carried church-power as far as it could well stretch; and who, when the severities of the adverse party forced these lamentations from them, were obliged to plead their cause upon principles, which made no reserve of authority with respect to one sort of religious society more than another P.

• “It belongeth to synods and councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience.” *Assembly's Confession*, ch. xxxi. art. 3. This hath given occasion to apply some words of *Isaiab*, viz. *Look unto the rock from whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit from whence ye are digged*, to certain dissenters, who have scrupled to subscribe the first clause of the 20th article of our church. At present this wit would be misapplied. In the year 1718, some of the wisest and most eminent among the dissenting ministers made a noble stand against some imposers of tests in their own fraternity. And in the year 1727, more of them refused to subscribe this very *Westminster Confession*.

• Thus the ingenious Bishop *Taylor*, pleading for the liberty of prophesying, at a time when, to use his own expression, *the vessel of the church was dashed in pieces*, found it necessary to assert against the task-masters of those days, that, “If we have found out what foundation Christ and his Apostles did lay; that is, what body and system of articles simply necessary they taught and required of us to believe; we need not, we cannot go any further for foundation, we CANNOT ENLARGE THAT SYSTEM OR COLLECTION.” p. 17. — But, when the



## 56 THE CONFESSIONAL.

Among others to whom established confessions had been particularly grievous, were the remonstrants in *Holland*, after the synod of *Dort*. Their assemblies were prohibited, and their ministers silenced and banished, for no other offence but contradicting certain doctrines, which, as we have seen above, the forefathers of their persecutors held to be of *no importance*; and which had gained no new merit, but that of being established by law.

One would have imagined that this usage would have cured the Remonstrants of all good liking to *confessions* for ever. And so perhaps it did of their good-liking to *all* confessions — but *one of their own framing*, which *Episcopus* and his fellows actually composed, subscribed, and published, in this state of exile.

This step was so very extraordinary for men in their condition, whose distresses had been occasioned by enforcing a system drawn up in the

shattered vessel came to be refitted, the skilful pilots found she neither had been, nor ever could be, steered to the port they aimed at, by these directions. And accordingly, when they got possession of the helm, they adopted the old *enlarged* system, adding as much more of their own to the collection, as they perceived might be necessary to conduct the vessel in safety to the *golden coast*; without paying the least regard to the remonstrances of those, who claimed an equal property in the bottom, and who incessantly clamoured, that neither the freight nor the steerage were proper for the port to which they were bound, and which, as all sides outwardly agreed, lay in a *kingdom that was not of this world*.

same

same form, that they rightly judged the world would expect some satisfactory account of it, which therefore they attempt to give, in a long Apology prefixed to their Confession; wherein, not contented with alledging such inducements as might well be supposed to oblige men in their situation to explain and avow their principles to the public, they enter into a particular detail of arguments in favour of confessions in general; dropping indeed the point of *right* to establish them as tests of truth, but insisting largely on their *utility* and *expedience* in a variety of cases; and, as they seem to me to have brought together the whole merits of the cause on that head of defence, I shall attend them in the next chapter, with some particular considerations on the several articles of their plea.

## C H A P. III.

*The Apology of the Remonstrants for Confessions,  
in consideration of their Expediency and Utility,  
examined.*

**I**T had been objected to confessions in general, that “they derogated from the authority and sufficiency of the scriptures; that they encroached upon the liberty of private conscience, and the independency of Protestant churches, and that they tended to nothing better than separation and schism.”

The Remonstrants reply, that “these objections did not affect confessions themselves, but only the *abuse* of them.” But, however, as the objectors had so many instances to appeal to, where confessions had been, and still were thus *abused*, and the Remonstrants so few, if any, where they were not, the latter were obliged to set out with very ample concessions.

“Undoubtedly,” say they, “those phrases and forms of speaking, in which God and Christ delivered themselves at first, for the instruction of unlearned and ordinary men, must needs be sufficient for the instruction of Christians in all succeeding ages; — consequently it is possible that the church of Christ may not only *be*, but  
2 “also



“ also that it may *well be*, without those human  
 “ forms and explications, called Confessions \*.

One would wonder now, what the Remonstrants could find to say for the support of their side of the question. For, if the phrases and forms of speaking, made use of in the written word, are sufficient for the instruction of unlearned and ordinary men in all things which concern the worship of God, and their own and others everlasting salvation; and if, as the Objectors insisted, and the Remonstrants could not deny, many and great evils were, *for the most part*, occasioned by such phrases and forms of speaking in confessions, as are not to be found in scripture, the Objectors were fairly authorized to conclude, not barely for the *possibility* that the church of Christ might *well be*, but for the *certainty* that it might *better be*, without such human forms, than with them.

The Remonstrants, however, attempt to recover their ground as follows. “ If prophesyings,  
 “ or interpretations of scripture, say these Apolo-  
 “ gists, are not unprofitable, yea rather, if they  
 “ be sometimes in certain respects necessary, when  
 “ proposed by teachers and pastors in universities  
 “ and churches, or other Christian assemblies, for  
 “ the information of the ignorant, &c. in familiar,  
 “ clear, and usual expressions, though not in the  
 “ very words of scripture; it cannot seem unpro-

\* Preface to the Remonstrants Confession, published in English at London, 1676. p. 12, 13.

“ fitable,

## 60 THE CONFESSIONAL.

“fitable, much less unlawful or hurtful, if *more*,  
 “ministers of Jesus Christ do, by mutual con-  
 “sent, joint studies and endeavours, for the great-  
 “er illustration of divine truth, removing of  
 “scandals, edifying the Christian community, or  
 “other holy and pious purposes, publicly open  
 “and declare their judgments upon the mean-  
 “ings of scripture, and that in certain composed  
 “forms <sup>b</sup>.

It is no easy matter to discover the drift of this argument. Do the Remonstrants mean to insist on the superior influence and authority of *more* ministers, in the business of expounding the scriptures, in comparison with single pastors or professors? By no means. Upon any supposition of this nature, the *Belgic* Confession had an authority which rendered their revolt from it inexcusable <sup>c</sup>. Would they be understood to say,

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. p. 13, 14.

<sup>c</sup> Dr. *Stebbing*, indeed, would have every one to own, that  
 “Those explications of scripture, which, after the maturest de-  
 “liberation, and the use of all proper helps, are agreed  
 “upon by a *whole body of men*, are less liable to be faulty and  
 “defective, than those which particular persons may frame to  
 “themselves.” *Rat. Eng.* p. 29. In plain English, *You will*  
*always be safest with the majority.* For where is the body of  
 men who will not pretend to the *maturest deliberation*, and the  
 use of the *properest helps*? But the Remonstrants were men of  
 sense, and saw, what Dr. *Stebbing's* cause required him to con-  
 ceal, namely, that considerations of this kind must, in the  
 event, drive every man headlong into the established religion,  
 whatever it happens to be, or by whomsoever devised; whe-  
 that

## THE CONFSSIONAL 61

that Confessions composed by the joint studies of several ministers, are as useful as ordinary sermons and lectures in churches and universities? No, they make no such comparison; they only infer, with much ambiguity, from the premises, that *Confessions*, with the circumstances mentioned, *cannot seem unprofitable*.

But, be their meaning what you will, the cases of interpreting scripture in occasional prophesyings, and in stated confessions, are dissimilar in so many respects, that nothing can be inferred from the *utility* of the former, in favour of the latter: but rather the contrary.

If prophesyings, or interpretations of scripture in Christian assemblies, are not delivered in familiar, clear, and usual forms of speech, they are neither necessary nor profitable; nor can any thing be inferred from the utility of *such* prophesyings at all. On the other hand, if the scriptures are opened and explained to the people in easy and familiar expressions, by their ordinary pastors, what possible use can you find for a systematical confessional? unless you think fit to establish it as a necessary supplement to the holy scripture, and then you once more return the question to the point of *right*.

Again. What the preacher delivers from the pulpit, or the professor from his chair, they deliver by a synagogue of Pharisees, a Turkish divan, a council of Trent, or, what the Remonstrants liked as little as any of them, a synod of Dort.

ver



ver as the sentiments and conclusions of single men, who have no authority to enforce their explications, any farther than their own good sense, integrity, accuracy, and judgment, make way for them. For the rest, their doctrines may be questioned, the men themselves called upon to review them, and, if they see reason, correct, and even retract them, not only without offence, but, in some cases, with advantage to the common faith. But doctrines, opinions, and explications of scripture, reduced to a fixed form, and avowed by the public act of many subscribing ministers, (who by the way are full as likely to be fallible in a body, as in their personal capacity) put on quite another aspect. In that case all examination is precluded. No one subscriber is impowered to explain or correct for the rest. Nor can any of them retract, without standing in the light of a schismatic and a revolter from his brethren.

It is to little purpose that the Remonstrants would limit the stress to be laid upon confessions, to their agreement with truth, and reason, and scripture. The matter of complaint is, that this agreement should be predetermined by the decision of these leading subscribers, in such sort, as to discourage all free examination, and constrain the people to acquiesce in a precarious system, by the mere influence of great names and respectable authorities, which, without any additional weight, are too apt to overawe the judgment

judgment of all sorts of men, even in cases of the greatest importance.

The *expedience* of Confessions in no wise appearing from these general considerations, let us now see what particular uses the Remonstrants have for them.

And here they tell us "of times when gross  
"and noxious errors prevail in the world; when  
"necessary heads of belief are neglected, and  
"many points of faith urged and insisted on,  
"which are not necessary; when no distinction  
"is made between doctrines that are barely profitable, and those which are absolutely necessary; when human inventions are bound upon  
"men's consciences; and, lastly, when many  
"false and groundless doctrines are palliated  
"and cloathed in scripture-language. In these  
"times, they think it not barely expedient, but  
"in a good measure necessary, that pastors of  
"churches should advise and consult together,  
"and, if they perceive that *blind miserable mortals*  
"may be assisted in their searches after Truth,  
"in such days of danger, by a clear elucidation  
"of divine meanings, then may they profitably  
"set forth the same, &c." <sup>d</sup>

But, in the first place, How does it appear that Confessions have more of this *elucidating* property than other sorts of Rescripts? It is a common complaint, that these formularies of doctrine,

<sup>d</sup> Pag. 14, 15.

abounding

## 64 THE CONFESSIONAL.

abounding in artificial and scholastic terms, are rather apt to perplex and confound things that are otherwise clear and plain, than to illustrate any thing with a superior degree of perspicuity. And I am really afraid there is no room to except the very confession to which this apology is prefixed.

But to let this alone; there occurs another difficulty, with respect to this *elucidation*, not so easily got over. It is well known, that some opinions have been formally condemned by the framers of Creeds and Confessions, as gross and noxious errors, which, however, have been maintained by very solid reasoning, not to say considerable authorities, from the scriptures themselves.

"There are few heresies," says Dr. Stebbing, "which great learning and good sense have not been called in to countenance: he, therefore, that would effectually crush them, must take away these supports." That is to say, he *must*, if he *can*; and that has not always proved an easy task, even when attempted by the accumulated skill and learning of Councils or Convocations. These are difficulties, out of which *blind miserable mortals* are rarely extricated by confessions, which are rather of the *dogmatical*, than the *didactic* strain; and oftentimes leave the reader to guess at the reasons, why the com-

<sup>c</sup> *Rational Enquiry*, pag. 47.



plers are so positive in some of their assertions, for which they do not condescend to offer any proof. These *noxious errors* too have, sometimes, procured themselves to be established by another party of Confessionists and Creedmakers; in which case, these authorized formularies are so far from being of any real utility to an unprejudiced inquirer, that they only serve to destroy the force and virtue of each other.

Again, if confessions are really profitable towards suppressing these gross and noxious errors, it must be profitable, and in the same proportion, needful, to enlarge and amplify them as often as such errors arise, and the birth of every new heresy, should always be attended with a new article in the confession.

Perhaps there is scarce a year passes over, in any country where the presses are open, and men's tongues at liberty, without bringing forth some new opinion, or reviving some old one with new circumstances, contrary to, or at least

<sup>1</sup> One article of difference between K. Charles I. and the Scotch Protestors, anno 1638, turned upon the necessity of *renewing* and *applying* confessions of faith to every *present* emergency of the church. This the Scots compared to the riding of *Merches*, or boundaries, upon every new "Incroachment." And, indeed, supposing the *utility* of confessions to be what the Remonstrants say it is, King *Charles's* whole convocation could not have furnished him with an answer to this argument of the *North Britons*, in behalf of their new formulary. See *Rusworth's Collections*, vol. II. pag. 774.

different

## 66 THE CONFESSIONAL

different from the approved and orthodox system; and, consequently, within the description of a gross and noxious error. Suppose the requisite strictures on these heterodoxies had been added to the confessions of the several churches where they have appeared for the last two hundred years; to what a comfortable bulk would an *Harmony* of these confessions have amounted by this time? what plenty of *elucidation* might such an *Harmony* have afforded to *blind miserable mortals*? and what a field is here opened for declaiming against the indolence and drowsiness of our appointed watchmen, who, during this long and perilous interval, have been silent upon so many important subjects; suffering this multitude of heresies to pass uncorrected by any public censure, even while their partizans have been incessantly preaching up to us the great *utility* of confessions, as the only sovereign antidotes against them?

But, instead of inveighing against our superiors for any omissions of this kind, let us make use of this very circumstance to point out to them the *inutility* (perhaps something worse) of our present established formularies of faith and doctrine. — What is become of all those heresies against which none of these public provisions have been made? Why, many of them are dead and sunk down into utter oblivion, as if they had never been; others being left open to free debate,

debate, have had no worse effect in religion, than other harmless and innocent, and even edifying problems, are allowed to have in literature and philosophy : — Whence the conclusion seems to be inevitable, that the malignity of other heresies (and perhaps the very existence of some of them) has been perpetuated, *only* by the respectable notice that some church or other has thought fit to take of them in an established confession.

I will presume to support the justice of this remark, by an instance or two in our own establishment.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> of K. Edward's Articles, a formal censure was passed upon the restorers of *Origen's* opinion concerning *the temporary duration of future punishments*. But in the Articles of 1562, this censure is not to be found. Undoubtedly the question is of great importance with respect to the influences and sanctions of the Christian religion ; nor is there any point of theology upon which churches may be supposed to *decide* more reasonably, than this. And yet, had the negative of this problem, *whether future punishments shall be eternal?* still been stigmatized with this heretical brand, we should probably have wanted several learned and accurate disquisitions on the subject, from some of our most eminent writers, such as *Russet, Tillotson, Hartly, &c.* By whose researches we have gained at least a clearer state of the case, and a more accurate insight in-



68 THE CONFESSIONAL.

to the language of the scriptures relative to it, than the compilers of the article had before them; without laying any invidious prejudice on the judgment or conscience of any man living, or precluding the right that every Christian has to determine for himself, in a case where his interest is so great and important.

Again, the 40th of these original articles, "affirmed it to be contrary to the orthodox faith, to maintain that the souls of men deceased, do sleep, without any manner of sense, to the day of judgment, &c." This was likewise dismissed in 1562: since when, the doctrine condemned, and (some few faint efforts excepted) all controversy concerning it have lain dormant, till very lately, that something very like a demonstration that our first reformers were mistaken on this head, has been offered to the world<sup>s</sup>; which probably had never seen the light, if an assent to this 40th article had still remained a part of our ministerial subscription.

As to what the remonstrants say of the neglect of necessary heads of belief; urging and insisting on points of faith, which are not necessary;

<sup>s</sup> In a sermon on *the Nature and End of Death*, and a curious appendix subjoined to the third edition of *Considerations on the Theory of Religion*, &c. by Dr. Edmund Law, the reverend, learned, and worthy Master of St. Peter's College, Camb. How many doctrines are *defended*, how many are *not opposed*, not because they are to be found in the New Testament, but because they are *established* in a Liturgy, or *decided* in an Article?

binding

binding human inventions on men's consciences; misapplications of scripture-expressions and authorities, and the like, if these are not to be prevented or corrected by the current labours of able and honest pastors, joined to the justice which every man owes to himself, in searching the scriptures for satisfaction in all doubtful cases; it is in vain to expect any relief from confessions; many of which, if not all, are accused on some side, of these very abuses which the remonstrants propose by their means to reform.

2. Another use which the remonstrants have for confessions is, "to obviate foul and dishonest  
"slanders, calumnies, and suspicions, with which  
"those honest and upright divines, who under-  
"take to set *blind miserable mortals* right, may be  
"soiled by their adversaries. In which case, say  
"they, who is there that will not think them  
"constrained to inform the Christian world, what  
"manner of persons they are in religion, by an  
"ingenuous confession of their judgment: espe-  
"cially if they see that, unless they do it, all  
"good men will be estranged from them, their  
"profelytes return to their vomit, and, conse-  
"quently, the truth of God be wounded through  
"the sides of their wronged reputation <sup>h</sup>."

The remonstrants had here an eye to their own particular case, and therefore we shall do no wrong to their argument, if we determine the

<sup>h</sup> Pag. 16. &c.

70 THE CONFESSIONAL.

value of it by their particular success. One of the calumnies complained of in this preface, is that "the remonstrants concealed some things, of which they were ashamed to give their judgment in public." How do they obviate this calumny by their confession? How does their publicly *confessing some* of their doctrines prove that they had *concealed none*? They do not venture to say, that in this formulary they had declared their judgment on *every* point of theology. On the contrary, they admit, that they had purposely *waved* certain thorny and subtle questions, *leaving them to the idle and curious*. Might not the doctrines relative to *these* questions, be the very things they were ashamed to confess? and if so, what is their apology for *waving* them, but mere subterfuge and evasion?

But, indeed, it was worse with the poor remonstrants than all this came to. No sooner was their confession made public, than their adversaries fell upon them with a fresh load of calumnies, taking occasion from the confession itself; accusing it of "swarming with dreadful heresies from the beginning to the end, not excepting even the very title page <sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> Bayle's Dict. Art. *Episcopius*, Rem. F. See likewise *la Roche*, Abridg. p. 685. who mentions indeed only the censures of two private ministers on the remonstrants' confession, an effect, I am afraid, of his extreme and too visible partiality for their cause. They who will take the trouble to turn to

What



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 71

What is now to be done? Shall the remonstrants go to work again, and publish a *second* confession to confute these new calumnies? and after that, if future occasion should be given, (as they might be sure it would) a *third*, and a *fourth*? No, common sense would tell them, it was all labour in vain, and that there is but one way of refuting these endless calumnies effectually, namely, by confronting the accusation with the matter of fact, and appealing from time to time, to a sort of evidence, which formularies of confession will not admit of.

The remonstrants seem to have been aware, that it might be thought sufficient to obviate all charges of heresy, if the accused parties were only to express themselves in scripture-language. "But, they tell us, that this very thing is charged upon them as a crime, that, under the words of scripture, they cherish in their bosoms the worst meanings, and most prejudicial to the glory of God, and the salvation of man, which reduces them to a necessity, whether they will or no—by some public declaration of their judgment, to purge themselves, and to maintain and defend the sincerity of their belief \*."

Bayle, *loc. cit.* will see, that the words transcribed above, are part of a censure of this confession, published by the professors of Leyden.

\* Pag. 17, 18.

F 3.

Well

Well then, let us consider how this case stands. The *Calvinists* charge it upon the *Remonstrants* as a crime, that, under scripture words, they cherish the worst meanings. The *remonstrants* say it is a calumny, and appeal to their confession. The same *remonstrants* bring the same accusation against another set of men, as we have seen above. May not these men say too, it is a calumny? May not they too defend themselves in a confession? and at what does all this futile reasoning aim, but at proving, that whatever is once got into a confession, must of necessity be infallibly true?

Where indeed any particular church can procure an establishment for its confession, in such sort as to make it a rule of teaching, and a test of orthodoxy for all her pastors and professors, a bridle upon the tongue, and a shackle upon the pen-hand of every man who is disposed to speak or write against it, formularies of this kind *may* have their *use* and *expedience*, in *securing the privileges, interests, and emoluments of that particular church*; and, being armed with coercive penalties, may likewise operate in the several cases abovementioned. But, according to our apologists, these are the circumstances in which the abuses of confessions do chiefly consist. "They are not  
 "for allowing confessions to be the limits and  
 "bounds within which religion is to be shut up;  
 "the *indices* of straight and crooked, or the an-  
 "vil to which all controversies of faith are to be  
 "brought; nor would they have any man tyed to  
 "them,

"them, but just so far, and so long, as he is convinced in his conscience, that the doctrine of the confession accords with the scripture <sup>1</sup>."

This is just and reasonable; and it would be both unjust and unreasonable, to deny the remonstrants their due praise for their moderation, tenderness, and honest regard to the rights of private judgment. But, however, nothing is more certain, than that, by these limitations and concessions, they give up all the peculiar utility and expedience of these systematical forms, for which they profess themselves advocates in other parts of this preface; leaving them no more virtue or efficacy in instructing the ignorant, confuting errors and heresies, or silencing calumnies, than may be reasonably claimed by, and ascribed to, the writings and discourses of any particular divine of judgment and learning.

There is, indeed, little doubt, but that, in bringing down confessions so very low, particularly in their *three-fold caution* concerning the use of them, the remonstrants took a particular aim at the synod of *Dort*, by whose *proud cruelty* they had suffered so much. In *their* situation, to have put any high value upon public confessions, had been to preclude themselves from all reasonable apology for their conduct. And yet who knows, in what all this moderation and lenity would have ended, had the remonstrants been fortunate enough to have en-

<sup>1</sup> Pag. 20, 21.



gaged the civil powers, and, with them, the majority on their side? For my part, I should have entertained no worse opinion of their integrity, if, instead of this trimming apology, (wherein they dextrously enough fetch back with one hand, what they had appeared to give with the other) they had fairly and honestly told the world (what was certainly the truth of the case) that their circumstances required they should have a religious test as a cement of their party, and to put them upon the respectable footing of *a church*. In the midst of all their moderation, we have seen them above expressing their concern, lest their *profelytes* should return to their *vomit*. In other passages they speak of confessions, as *watch-towers, ensigns, and standards*. On one occasion they have unwarily dropped this observation: "There are some things of so great weight and moment, that they cannot be gained without the extreme hazard of our salvation. Freely to contradict these, or quietly to suffer them to be contradicted by others, would be the farthest from prudence and charity possible." What, may we suppose, would the gentle *Episcopius* have done with the *gainsayers* of these things, invested, as he might possibly have been, with a commission from the secular arm? All this moderation and forbearance might, after all, have amounted to no more than what all protestant churches *profess*; namely, to assert the sovereign authority of the scriptures, with a com-  
modious

modious saving to themselves of a concurrent privilege, of providing for the *utility* of their own *well-being*, by an orthodox test.

Let no man say, that, considering the temperate language of the Remonstrants, a surmise of this kind cannot be justified. In this verbal deference for the authority of the scriptures, no church has ever gone farther than our own, not consequently left greater latitude for private judgment.

"We receive and embrace" (says the church of *England* by the pen of Bishop *Jewel*) "all the canonical scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament; — we own them to be the heavenly voices by which God hath revealed his will to us; — in them ONLY can the mind of man acquiesce; in them all that is necessary for our salvation is abundantly and plainly contained; — they are the very might and power of God unto salvation; they are the foundations of the Apostles and Prophets upon which the church of God is built; they are the most certain and infallible rule, by which the church may be reduced if she happen to stagger, slip, or err, by which all ecclesiastical doctrines ought to be tried; no law, no tradition, no custom, is to be received or continued, if it be contrary to scripture; no, though St. Paul himself, or an angel from heaven, should come and teach otherwise."<sup>m</sup>

<sup>m</sup> *Contra eas nec legem, nec traditionem, nec consuetudinem ullam audiendam esse*, says the Latin *Apol.* sect. 27.

This was once the sense of the church of *England*, whatever authority she may have since pretended to, upon other principles. Be this as it may, such of her divines as have asserted this authority with the uttermost zeal, and in the highest terms, have yet, in the same breath, extolled her moderation, in laying no greater stress upon her Confession, than the Remonstrants themselves seem to contend for.

"Our church," says Bishop *Bull*, "professeth  
"not to deliver *all* her articles (*all*, I say, for  
"some of them are coincident with the funda-  
"mental points of Christianity) as essentials of  
"faith, without the belief whereof no man can  
"be saved, but only propounds them as a body  
"of safe and pious principles, for the preserva-  
"tion of peace, to be subscribed, and not openly  
"contradicted, by her sons."

Nay, even the rigidly-ecclesiastical Dr. *Stebbing* allows, that "when we speak of a *right* to deter-  
"mine what is the true sense of any article of  
"faith, we do not propose the explication, given  
"in virtue of this *right*, as a rule for the faith or  
"conduct of Christians; but only as a rule, ac-  
"cording to which they shall either be admitted  
"or not admitted to officiate as public ministers."

'Tis true, the obscurity of these concessions is such, that no man can tell what is intended to be given up by them, and what reserved for the

<sup>a</sup> *Vindication of the Church of England*, p. 178.

<sup>b</sup> *Rational Enquiry*, p. 36.



church. In my opinion, they are hardly sense. But this likewise is the misfortune of the Remonstrants, who *oscillate* the question backwards and forwards, till no mortal can find out what they mean to ascribe to, or what to detract from, the virtue and merit of a public Confession.

The Remonstrants, however, have had thus far the better of us; they *believed* their Confession at least when they made this Apology for it. We are driven to make Apologies for, and even to defend, subscription to a Confession which many subscribers do not believe; and concerning which *no two thinking men* (according to an ingenious, and right reverend writer) *ever agreed exactly in their opinion, even with regard to any one article of it* P.

Of what curious materials these extraordinary Apologies and Defences are framed, we are now proceeding to examine.

† Dedication to the *Essay on Spirit*, p. vi.

CHAP.

## CHAP. IV.

*A particular Examination of Bishop BURNET'S Introduction to the Exposition of the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England.*

**H**itherto our observations have been general. Little has been said on the subject of established confessions, in which our own church has any greater concern than other protestant churches. We shall now be a little more particular. And as Bishop *Burnet* has brought together all the topics of any moment, relating to the subscriptions required of the English clergy, in a particular discourse prefixed to his Exposition of our *Articles of Religion*, we shall do our venerable mother no wrong, in selecting, for our present consideration, the apology of so masterly an advocate.

But, before we proceed to examine his Lordship's solutions of the several difficulties which have been supposed to encumber the case of our English subscriptions, it may be necessary to give a little previous attention to the motives and reasons, which engaged his Lordship in this particular work of expounding the *Articles* of our church.

"Some of the *Articles*," says the Bishop, "seemed to lean so entirely to an *absolute predestination*, that some, upon that account, scrupled the subscribing them: and others reproached our church with this, that though our

## THE CONFESSIONAL 79

"articles looked one way, yet our *doctors*, for the  
 "most part, went the other way. It was fit such  
 "a point should be well cleared; and it was in  
 "order to that, that the late blessed Queen  
 "[MARY] did command me to explain those  
 "first; which she afterwards enlarged to the  
 "whole thirty-nine <sup>a</sup>.

Let us reflect a little on this remarkable circumstance.

Every one knows that, in the sensible and pathetic *Conclusion*; subjoined to this excellent Prelate's *History of his own Times*, his Lordship has not scrupled to declare, "that the requiring subscription to the thirty-nine Articles, is a great  
 "imposition <sup>b</sup>." An opinion which was not the result of a late experience. His Lordship had expressed himself to the same purpose to the principal men of *Geneva*, with respect to their *Consensus Doctrinae*, many years before he could have any view to the circumstances which gave rise to his *Exposition*, and that with so much zeal and eloquence, that, according to the writer of his life, (a witness worthy of all belief) "it was  
 "through his (the Bishop's) credit, and the  
 "weight of his character, that the clergy at *Geneva* were released from these subscriptions,  
 "and only left subject to punishment or censure,

<sup>a</sup> Bishop *Burnet's* Remarks on the Examination of his Exposition of the Second Article of our Church, p. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Folio edition, vol. II. p. 634.

" in



## 86 THE CONFESSIONAL

"in case of writing or preaching against the  
"established doctrine."

These being his Lordship's uniform sentiments, in the earlier, as well as the later part of his life, a question is naturally suggested, why he should write a book, in the mean season, in the avowed purpose of making men easy under their obligations to subscribe? An attempt which could have no other tendency, than to perpetuate the *imposition* in all succeeding times. For the point the Bishop was to clear being this, "that the  
"articles were capable of the several senses of  
"different doctors," the consequence would be, that *all* might safely subscribe them: which would of course supersede the necessity of abolishing subscriptions on the part of the church, let the imposition be ever so grievous to those who could not come into the Bishop's expedients; and this, as his Lordship had good reason to know, was no uncommon case.

Whether Bishop *Burnet* considered, or indeed whether he saw, his enterprize in this point of light, cannot be determined. That there were *some* considerations, which, notwithstanding the weight of a royal command, made him enter upon this task with no little reluctance, appears pretty plainly from the following particulars:

1. In a paragraph just now cited from one of his Lordship's pamphlets, we are informed that he

<sup>c</sup> Life, vol. II. fol. edit. p. 693.

undertook his *Exposition*, at the command of Queen Mary: by whom he likewise says elsewhere, he was *first moved* to write it <sup>d</sup>. But in the *preface* to his *Exposition*, he says, " he was "*first moved* to undertake that work, by that " great prelate, who then sat at the helm, [Abp. " *Tillotson*] and only *determined* in it, by the command abovementioned *afterwards*."

You may, if you please, call this a contradiction; to me the truth of the case is clearly this, that the great prelate, unable to prevail with his friend *Burnet*, to undertake an affair of that nature at his own motion, applied to the Queen, whose influence, added to his own, left the good Bishop no room to decline the service, however disagreeable it might be to him.

2. The Queen and the Archbishop, dying soon after the *Exposition* was finished, and before it was put to the press, the Bishop, as he informs us himself, " being advised not to publish it, by some of " his friends, who concurred with him in opinion, " that such a work would lay him open to many " malicious attacks, kept it by him in manuscript, " no less than *five years*: at the end of which " interval, he was prevailed on by the Archbishop " [*Tennison*] and many of his own order, to delay " the publishing it no longer <sup>e</sup>." To which solicitations, we may suppose his Lordship to have

<sup>d</sup> Hist. O. T. vol. II. p. 228.

<sup>e</sup> Hist. O. T. ubi supra.

## 82 THE CONFESSIONAL.

given way with the less difficulty, as he was now at liberty to speak his mind in a *preface*, which, it is highly probable, had never seen the light in the circumstances we now have it, if the *Queen* and *Tillotson* had survived the publication of the *Exposition*. For,

3. In this *preface*, the Bishop takes particular care to apprise his readers, "that his *Exposition* " was not a work of *authority*; and that, in what " he had done, he was, as to the far greater part, " rather an *historian*, and a *collector* of what others " had written, than an *author* himself." But what is still more, he there freely declares, the slender opinion he had of the effect of such expedients as he had suggested in his *introduction*, " The " settling on some equivocal formularies," says his Lordship, "will never lay the contention that " has arisen, concerning the chief points in difference between the Lutherans and the Calvinists." An observation which will hold good, with respect to equivocal senses put upon more positive and dogmatical formularies. In neither case are the men of different systems " left free, " as the Bishop thinks they should be, to adhere " to their own opinions:" and so long as they are not, they will be for ever struggling to get loose. No peace will ensue.

These sentiments, I humbly apprehend, had not appeared where we now find them, if the *Exposition* had been published as soon as it was

<sup>f</sup> See Bayle's *Dict. Musculus*, Rem. [G].

finished.



finished. The right reverend author would most probably have suppressed them, in mere tenderness to the good Archbishop, whose notions concerning these *healing measures*, and *middle ways*, were very different from those of Bishop Burnet. His Grace's temper was mild and cautious, even to the borders of timidity. His leading object was to keep church-matters in peace. What he thought of subscriptions is not very clear. Possibly he might think they were unwarrantable impositions, and wish, at the bottom, to be *well rid of them*. But the virulence of the opposition to a proposed *review* of the liturgy in 1689, had taught him caution with respect to such attempts. His Grace might, and certainly did, wish to procure more liberty for himself and all honest men, to write and speak their sentiments freely. But the *articles* stood in the way, and

\* And yet Dr. Birch, in his *Life* of this eminent prelate, hath preserved an anecdote, by no means favourable to this surmise. I mean that strange equivalent proposed by his Grace, in lieu of the common form of subscription, viz. *We do submit to the doctrine, discipline, and worship of the Church of England, as it SHALL BE established by law, and promise to teach and practise accordingly.* This would be bowing our necks to the yoke with a witness. What we subscribe to now, is before us; and in a condition to be examined before-hand. What SHALL BE established hereafter, we know not. By such a subscription, a man might oblige himself to teach and practise popery itself: "The Church of England," said Bishop Burnet once in a debate, "is an equivocal expression; and if popery should prevail, it would be called the Church of England still." See *Vox Cleri*, p. 68. Birch, *Life of Tillotson*, 8vo. p. 183.

G immove-

## 84 THE CONFESSIONAL

immoveable barrier to the church;—a fort of a *guard-house*, to which the centinels of the hierarchy were for ever dragging poor culprits, who had strayed ever so little beyond the verge of the court. All that could be done, as the case then stood, was to *expound* these articles so, that men of different opinions might subscribe them; and, by that means, be brought to bear with each other in controvertible points, and to debate matters freely, without incurring suspicions or reproaches of heresy or prevarication. Into this service, I presume, was the Bishop of *Salisbury* pressed by his Grace of *Canterbury*; and with whatever reluctance he might undertake it, we may be sure he would never mortify his friend by publicly declaring, as he does in this *preface*, the contemptible opinion he had of such expedients.

4. There is one circumstance farther to be observed on this subject, which is well worth our notice. Bishop *Burnet* was under a greater difficulty with respect to such an undertaking, than most men. The readiest way to have answered *Tillotson's* purpose, would have been to consider and expound this articular system so, that subscription to it might stand for no more than a peaceable acquiescence, or, at most, an engagement not openly to contradict it. But, unluckily for the present expounder, he had long before declared in a celebrated work, “that there appeared no reason for this conceit, no such thing [as their being intended only for articles of peace] being declared when the articles  
“ were

"were first set out; insomuch, that they who  
 "subscribed them *then*, did either believe them to  
 "be true, or else they did grossly prevaricate<sup>b</sup>."

It is, indeed, highly probable, that his Lordship never altered his opinion in this matter. For even when his *Exposition* was about to be published, Bishop *Williams* strongly recommended, that they might be considered only as *articles of peace*. Upon which the late Judge *Burnet*, mentioning this incident in his father's life, observes, "that there might, perhaps, be reason to wish  
 "that they had only been imposed as such, but  
 "there was nothing in our constitution to warrant  
 "an expositor in giving that sense to them." His father was plainly in the same sentiments when he set out his *Exposition*; which makes it the more extraordinary, that some modern writers should still contend for this *pacific* sense of subscription, when two such able judges, the one of the original intention of the Church, the other of the point of Law, have so clearly and positively determined against them.

Whether Bishop *Burnet* would have given more room to subscribers in his *Exposition*, if that passage in his *History of the Reformation* had been out of the way, it would even be impertinent to guess. Had Bishop *Williams* been the *expositor*, he would, it is likely, have carried subscriptions no higher than an obligation to *acquiesce* in the doctrine of our articles; upon a presumption,

<sup>b</sup> Hist. Reformat. vol. II. p. 169.



possibly, that the present generation, if they could agree upon it, need not be bound by the *original* intention of the church or the compilers. Sir *Thomas Burnet*, however, we see, carries us back to our *constitution*; and that implies, that what was *once* the intention of the church in this matter, must be still her intention: and so, undoubtedly, thought the Bishop his father. And as his Lordship had all along seen things in this light, it is amazing to me, that the sense he expressed of the first subscriptions, in his History of the Reformation, should not suggest to him, that he could no more give the subscribers of the present age the privilege of availing themselves of different *grammatical* senses, than he could allow them to consider the articles as articles of peace.

His Lordship hath said in plain terms, "that they who subscribed the articles when they were first set out, did either believe them to be true, or else they did grossly prevaricate." Now, if they believed them to be true, they certainly believed them to be true in *one precise uniform sense*; that is to say, in a sense *exclusive* of all *diversity of opinion*, as the title of the articles plainly imports. And if so, what is there in our constitution to warrant an expositor to allow men to subscribe in *different* senses? If the first subscribers would have prevaricated in so doing, the original intention of the compilers will fix the same reproach upon *all* subscribers who deviate from the church's sense to this hour.

But

But whether we are right in supposing the good Bishop to have undertaken this task against the grain or not, we have good reason to believe, that his success did not yield him the highest satisfaction in the latter end of his life. His discontent will appear by and by, in a citation from a pamphlet he was obliged to write in defence of his *Exposition*, immediately after it was published; and in his golden legacy, at the end of his last history, he scruples not to say, "that the greater part of the clergy subscribe the articles without ever examining them, and others do it because they *must* do it, tho' they can hardly satisfy their consciences about some things in them." Is not this saying, that all his pains in expounding the articles, and all his expedients to temper the case of subscription to all tastes and complexions, had been absolutely thrown away; and that subscription, after all the colours that can be put upon it, is no better than an unwarrantable imposition?

I cannot leave this view of the connection between these two prelates *Tillotson* and *Burnet*, without a short reflection on these *trimming* methods in matters of religion. When were they ever known to succeed? And where were they ever known to conciliate the mind of any one of those unreasonable zealots, to whose humour they were accommodated? We, of this generation, have lived to see how greatly Archbishop *Tillotson* was mistaken, in thinking to win over the high-churchmen of those days, by his heal-

ing expedients. His gentle, lenitive spirit, was to their bigotry, what oil is to the fire. Bishop *Burnet's* friendship for the Archbishop carried him into these measures, contrary to his natural bent, and in mere complaisance to the Archbishop's apprehensions of a storm, which he dreaded above all other things. And I remember to have heard some old men rejoice, that *Burnet* was kept down by *Tillotson's* influence, from pushing the reformation of the church to an extremity that might have endangered the government itself. Some of these men, however, might have remembered, that when the Archbishop was no longer at hand to temper *Burnet's* impetuosity, the latter had prudence sufficient to temper his courage, and to keep him from attempting, what he had sense enough to perceive was impracticable<sup>1</sup>. But after

<sup>1</sup> This truly wise and good Prelate, however, seems to have entertained some hope, that, upon the accession of his Majesty King *George I.* things might take a more favourable turn. For thus he expresses himself in the Dedication of the third volume of his *History of the Reformation* to that illustrious Monarch, of ever-to-be-honoured memory. "Your Majesty, we trust, is  
 "designed by GOD, to *complete* the Reformation itself; to  
 "rectify what may be yet amiss, and to supply what is defective among us; to oblige us to live and to labour more  
 "suitably to our profession; to unite us more firmly among  
 "ourselves; to bury, and for ever to extinguish the fears of our  
 "relapsing again into *POPERY*; and to establish a confidence  
 "and correspondence with the *PROTESTANT* and *REFORMED*  
 "churches abroad." If any one ask how these hopes of the good Bishop came to be disappointed? he must be referred to the *History of the subsequent times*. There are two incidents,

all,



all, what has been the consequence of *Tillotson's* gentleness, and *Burnet's* complaisance for the times? even this; these two eminent lights of the English church could not have been more opposed while they lived, or more abused and vilified since they died, had they firmly and vigorously promoted, at all adventures, that reformation in the church of *England*, which, they were both of them deeply conscious, she very much wanted.

But after all, if what Bishop *Burnet* has offered under all these disadvantages, will not justify the church of *England* in requiring subscription to the xxxix Articles, or leave room for the sincerity of those doctors, who seem to go one way, while the articles look another, we may venture to conclude, without any just imputation of temerity,

however, upon record, which alone will go a great way towards accounting for the disappointment. 1. Bishop *Burnet* died in about seven months after the accession of that Monarch, from whose wisdom, moderation, and steadiness he expected all these good things, namely, in *March 1713*. And, 2. the *January* following, Dr. *William Wake* was promoted to the see of *Canterbury*; and he rather chose to establish a confidence and correspondence with the POPISH GALRICAN church, than with the PROTESTANT REFORMED churches, either at home or abroad.

Besides the staler instances of the outrageous treatment these two eminent prelates have met with in and nearer their own times, how implacably the malice of some men pursues them even to the present moment, may be seen in an abusive and scandalous character given of Bishop *Burnet*, in a late thing called, *Observations upon Tacitus*; and in some jacobite Remarks on the Life of Archbishop *Tillotson*, by Dr. *Birch*.

that this service will hardly be more effectually performed by men of another stamp, who may probably engage in it with more alacrity, and less circumspection. What the good Bishop has said on this behalf, we now proceed to consider.

His Lordship begins with stating the seeming impropriety<sup>1</sup> of making such a collection of tenets, the standard of the doctrine of a Church, "that, according to his Lordship, is deservedly valued by reason of her moderation. This," says the Bishop, "seems to be a departing from the simplicity of the first ages, which yet we set up for a pattern<sup>1</sup>."

This objected impropriety (which, by the way, his Lordship exceedingly strengthens and illustrates, by an induction of particulars) he rather endeavours to palliate and excuse, or, as he terms it, *explain*, than to deny or confute. He gives us an historical recital of the practice of former times, to shew that our church acts after a precedent of long standing. To this no other answer is necessary, than that this was the practice of times, which were not remarkable either for their *moderation* or *simplicity*, and of whose example the church of *England* cannot avail herself, consistently with her pretensions to these two amiable qualities<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Introduction, p. 1.

<sup>m</sup> To illustrate this truth, Dr. *Masheim's Compendious View of Ecclesiastical History* may be consulted, from the times of *Constantine* downwards; and, with greater advantage, in Dr. *MacLaine's* English translation, lately published.

But it seems this practice was originally the practice of the Apostles: a consideration, which will not only authorize our imitation, but strongly imply the utility and edification of the thing itself.

"There was a form," says his Lordship, "settled very early in most churches. This St. Paul, in one place, calls, *The form of doctrine that was delivered*; in another place, *The form of sound words*; which those, who were fixed by the Apostles in particular churches, had received from them. These words of his do import a *standard or fixed formulary*, by which all doctrines were to be examined." The passages here referred to, are, *Rom. vi. 17.* — *1 Tim. iv. 6.* — to which are added in the margin, *1 Tim. vi. 3.* — *2 Tim. i. 13.* and the Greek words in these several passages which are supposed to signify this *standard or fixed formulary*, run thus — Τυπος διδασκας — Τυπος πωσις υγιανουσαν λογων — Λογοι πιστευας, και καλης διδασκαλιας — Υγιανοντες λογοι, οι τε Κυρις ημων Ιησους Χριστος, και η κατ' ευσεβειαν διδασκαλια.

Now, when a capable and unprejudiced reader considers the variety of expression in these several passages, he will probably be inclined to think, that a *fixed formulary* of doctrine is the last thing a plain man would look for in them. A *fixed formulary*, one would think, should have a *fixed title*. Nor is it at all probable, that one and the

<sup>a</sup> Introd. p. 2.



## 92 THE CONFSSIONAL

same form of words should be described in terms, which may denote an hundred different forms.

To enter into a just criticism on these expressions, would be tedious and unnecessary. Suffice it to observe, after very competent judges, that τυπος διδαχης, and υποτυπωσις ὑγιανοῦσαν λόγον, appear to refer rather to the *exemplification* of the Christian doctrine in the *practice* of pious believers, than to any *form of words*. The doctrine is one thing, and the *type* of the doctrine another. The doctrine is, and must be expressed by, and consequently contained in, *some* form of words. But the *type* of that *form* must be somewhat different from the form itself; and the general acceptance of the word τυπος, points out the *practical exemplification* of the doctrine, to be the thing here intended. The text, Rom. vi. 17. is, it must be owned, obscure and difficult; but, without giving this sense to the words τυπος διδαχης, it is absolutely unintelligible \*. And whatever is the signification of τυπος here, must be the meaning of υποτυπωσις, 2 Tim. i. 13 P.

\* See Grotius and Bengelius's Gnomon upon the place. Τυπος, Typus, vestigium, figura, exemplar, forma. Hen. Stephens. Acta xxiii. 25. τυπος is the *literal copy* of Lyfias's epistle to Felix, not the sum or abridgment of it.

† The word is but once more to be found in the New Testament, viz. 1 Tim. i. 16. where the apostle says, *be found* mercy — εὑρεθῇ ὑποτυπωσιν τῶν πολλῶν ἐμμενῶν, &c. for a *pattern*; which is the same thing as an *example* of the doctrine of pardon and mercy, thro' Christ. In what sense the word τυπος was afterwards used, may be seen in Mills's translation of Bruys's Hist.

Again,

Again, the literal English of *ἰγιαμιλὶς αἰωνίου* is *healing or salutary words*; that is, the words of salvation or eternal life. Our translators have rendered the Greek participle by the equivocal words, *sound* and *wholesome*, which signified, I suppose, in their ideas, the same with *orthodox*.

If you ask where these *healing words* are to be found? I answer, in the scriptures, sometimes, perhaps, abridged and comprehended in some short summaries, which occur in *Paul's* epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*. But these are evidently not the *fixed formularies* his Lordship means. As the certain consequence of that must have been, that no man, or body of men whatsoever, could have had the least authority to add to them, or enlarge them in any future time.

And if any other *standard* or *formulary* is meant, it then comes to our turn to ask the question, Where is it to be found? What is become of it? For that it should be lost, or drop into utter oblivion, if it once had a real existence, is wholly incredible.

In answer to this demand, the Bishop gives us to understand, " that, by a *fixed formulary*, he

of the Popes, vol. II. p. 428. where an instrument, or edict, of the Emperor *Constant*, for the pacification of the disputes concerning the two Wills of Christ, is called the *Type*. Which instrument contained no formulary of doctrine, but only enjoined that the parties at variance should abide by the scriptures, the five oecumenical councils, and the plain and simple passages of the fathers.

" does

“does not mean *one precise* and invariable form  
 “of words, which he thinks it improbable the  
 “Apostles should leave behind them. For his  
 “Lordship observes, that the first Apologists for  
 “Christianity, when they deliver a short abstract  
 “of the Christian faith, do all vary from one  
 “another, both as to the order, and as to the  
 “words themselves. Whence he thinks it more  
 “probable, that they received these short ab-  
 “stracts from the Apostles themselves, with some  
 “variation.”

But surely, the moment you admit of *varia-  
 tions*, not only the *idea* of a *fixed* formulary, but  
 even the *use* of *any* formulary, as a *standard* or  
*test* of *all* doctrines, immediately vanishes away.  
 There must be left, in such *varying* formularies,  
 room for doubtful and precarious judgments :  
 and the scriptures alone, in all such cases, must  
 be the *dernier resort*. And if so, why might they  
 not as well have been admitted to decide in the  
 first instance?

But to come nearer to the case in hand. Do  
 any of these Apologists pretend to have received  
 any of these short abstracts from the Apostles  
 themselves? or does it appear among all the va-  
 riety of creeds which these primitive fathers have  
 exhibited, that any one of them came immediately  
 from the Apostles? Mr. *Whiston*, who, perhaps,  
 had made as exact a scrutiny into matters of this

† Some of these Creeds may be seen in Dr. *Chandler's* Case  
 of Subscription.



nature as any man living or dead, and who was as likely to adopt any thing for apostolic, which had the least pretence to so honourable an origin, frankly confesses, in one of his books, that "he finds no traces of an apostolical baptismal creed in the writings of the fathers, for *above* three centuries, though he makes no doubt, but there *was all along* such a creed among them, notwithstanding."

I cite Mr. *Whiston* as a witness to a fact, but lay no stress upon his opinion; nor, indeed, does it deserve the least regard, after he has told us, "that in the fourth century, many doubtful and exceptionable creeds were publicly used in the church, and did *then* exceedingly disturb and confound christianity." That is to say, *at*, or immediately *after, the very time*, when he makes no doubt but they had such an authentic baptismal creed among them.

But, till some of these apostolic formularies are brought to light, what his Lordship says of a *depositum*, lodged in the hands of a bishop, &c. must pass only for an inference from a *postulatum*, which, for many good reasons, and such, particularly, as rise from our scripture-accounts of the manner in which the Apostles preached and propagated the gospel, cannot be granted. And indeed, upon his Lordship's supposition, that the Apostles, or their companions, delivered these for-

\* Reply to Dr. *Allix's* Remarks, p. 18.

96 THE CONFESSIONAL.

formularies of faith as *deposits*, with such variations as the cases and situations of particular churches demanded, it is next to impossible they should all have perished so absolutely, that no remains of them are to be discovered to this hour.

But it seems, there is a way of accounting for this state of utter oblivion, into which these primitive formularies are fallen, very consistent with the supposition of their real existence for several centuries. We are told that these formularies contained a *κρυπτή διδασκαλία*, a *secret doctrine*, seldom, if ever, committed to writing; the use of which was, to secure the christian brotherhood (by way of a test or tessera of true discipleship) from being imposed upon by the insidious and dissembled pretences of pagans and heretics. And to this *secret doctrine* St. John is supposed to allude, where he says, 2 Epist. v. 10. *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed.*

Some divines are extremely ingenious in discovering what the sacred writers *allude* to, when they allude to nothing but what is plainly *expressed* in the context. Look back to verse the 7th, and carry the connection of the Apostle's discourse along with you to this 10th verse, and you will plainly perceive the *doctrine* mentioned in that verse to be this proposition, *Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*: which some persons, and those perhaps pretending to be *Christians*, then denied.

denied. If you refer the words, *this doctrine*, no farther back than to the foregoing verse, and suppose *the doctrine of Christ*, there mentioned, to be a *secret* formulary of doctrine, concealed among the sincere and faithful Christians for the purposes above mentioned, the consequence will be, that though a brother should confess that *Jesus Christ is come in the flesh*, and profess his belief of every gospel-truth, which is implied in, or depends upon, that confession, you *were not to receive him into your house, nor bid him God speed*, unless he brought this secret symbolical doctrine, which perhaps he might never have heard of. And how opposite that would be to the spirit of the gospel, needs no particular proof.

What other arguments or evidences there may be to support this fancy, I have not examined. I freely own it would mortify me greatly to find such a practice fixed upon the primitive church, by any sort of evidence, which should fairly derive it from the Apostles. Nothing could be

\* See Chillingworth's Letter to Lewgar. Life by Desmarteaux, p. 32. His words are these: "If you think me one of those to whom St. John forbids you to say *God save you*, then you are to think and prove me one of those deceivers which deny Jesus Christ to be *come in the flesh*."

\* I have been informed, that the late learned Dr. John Colbatch, professor of *casuistical divinity* in the university of Cambridge, hath left behind him a manuscript, wherein the reality of a *κρυπτον δογμα*, among the ancient Christians, is clearly proved. I wish such manuscript were printed. For, though I think it impossible that a secret of this kind, if ever it had



more inconsistent with the nature and circumstances of their commission, or the tenour, spirit, and design of the gospel in general. Our Saviour told his Apostles, that *what had been whispered in the ear* (the truths that had been communicated to them only) *should be by them proclaimed upon the house-tops* \*. St. Paul puts his being *pure from the blood of all men*, upon this, that *he had not shunned to declare to the churches where he preached, the whole counsel of God* †: and appeals to his openness, simplicity, and sincerity on many other occasions. In the same sense of their duty, the whole college join in prayer to God, that they may be enabled *to speak the word with all boldness*: *μὴ μετὰ φόβου καὶ κωλύσεως*, with all freedom; *sine involucris*, says Grotius ‡. And yet, it seems, they had among them a *secret doctrine*, reserved to be communicated only to adepts, to the *initiated*, and such as might be con-

any substantial foundation, should not transpire before the eighteenth century; yet such an attempt from so learned a person as Dr. Colbatch, would certainly furnish curiosities enow to recompence the pains of reading his book, however short and unsatisfied it might leave us with respect to the main point. A casuistical divine is, by his profession, a dealer in cryptics. The plain open truths of the New Testament will not agree with certain squeamish consciences. Few people, I apprehend, carry their scruples to casuists, without having a suspicion that the gospel is against them. The Doctor, to oblige, or to satisfy such patients, must fetch his drugs from the hidden wisdom of the Fathers and Schoolmen.

\* Luke xii. 3. compare Matth. x. 27.

† Acts xx. 26, 27.

‡ Acts iv. 29.

lived in: which indeed would have been reducing Christianity to a paltry sect, and bringing in distinctions, which could not but have disgusted new converts, many of whom, no doubt, had taken offence at the exclusive rites and mysteries in the religions they had professed, and would, on that very account, be rather inclined to embrace an institution where every thing was openly declared, and freely communicated.

What indeed might happen in some Christian societies, and, perhaps, in no long time after the demise of the Apostles, I would not undertake to say. As little as we know of those early times, we have sufficient evidence of their widely deviating from the simplicity of the gospel; and all I am concerned for is to shew, that the Apostles set them no such examples.

Bishop Burnet indeed makes no express mention of this *secret doctrine*; and whether he meant any thing of that sort, by the *depositum* lodged in the hands of the Bishop, is uncertain. But it is plain, without some such supposition, the loss of an apostolical formulary of faith must be utterly unaccountable; as a *depositum*, in any other circumstances, must have been preserved and perpetuated, with the same care and respect as the scriptures themselves.

But, admitting that there had been such a formulary of apostolical authority, and that some of those creeds, which the earlier Fathers have left

us; were framed after the model of it; we should certainly expect a good account, by what authority those large additions were made, which appear in creeds and confessions of a later date; the rather as we have good reason to believe, that the shortest of the ancient creeds now remaining came the nearest to the apostolic model, in course of time, as well as in their contents.

To this the good Bishop answers no otherwise, than by giving us a detail of those growing heresies, which occasioned such enlargements. He does not venture to say, that such enlargements were properly grounded upon, or duly authorized by such occasions. He had too honest a heart, and too discerning a head, to justify such practices at all events, as some others, both before him and after him, have done. On the contrary, he says, "it had been an invaluable blessing, if the Christian religion had been kept in its first simplicity." It is not clear, to me at least, that he thought even the imputation of idolatry, occasioned by the worship of the Son, a sufficient reason for adding the words, *of the same substance with the Father*, to the creeds of the Christian churches. He once more, however, says, "it had been a great blessing to the church, if a stop had been put here." After which, it could hardly be expected, that his Lordship should enter upon a formal defence of creeds and confessions, such as they have appeared in modern churches. Decently, therefore, and tenderly does



the good man close this part of his subject by saying, "In stating the doctrines of this church so copiously, our Reformers followed a method that had been used in a course of many ages."

And now, the vindication of the church of *England* being put upon this footing, it became necessary to specify the subsisting or the growing heresies, which would account for the *copious* form of doctrine established in our own church.

For this purpose, his Lordship mentions two particular circumstances in those times, to which it became necessary our Reformers should pay a particular regard.

The first of these circumstances was, "that, when the scriptures were first put into men's hands at the Reformation, as a rule of faith, many strange conceits were pretended to be derived from them, which gave rise to several impious and extravagant sects. Whence the Papists took occasion to calumniate the Reformation, as if these sectaries spoke out, what all Protestants thought, — and that all sects were the natural consequences of the Reformation, and of shaking off the doctrine of the infallibility of the church. So that, to stop these calumnies, it became necessary for particular churches, and for our own among the rest, to publish confessions of their faith, both for the instruction of their own members, and for covering them from the slanders of their adversaries."

Concerning this method of obviating calumnies by confessions, something has been said already in a foregoing chapter. But, however, as the case of the church of *England* was somewhat different from that of the Remonstrants, it may not be improper to consider this plea, in reference to our *English* Reformers.

And here it must be owned, Bishop Burnet has, with great justice and propriety, drawn a parallel between the slanders cast upon the Protestants by the Papists, and the calumnies thrown at the first Christians by the Jews and Pagans. Popery, at the time of the Reformation, was a mixture of Judaical rites and traditions, and of Pagan idolatry and superstition. The Reformation may be called the resurrection of the Christian religion, and would naturally be attended with all the consequences of the first preaching and spreading of the gospel. Here then the Reformers had a precedent before them; and should have done what the Apostles did in the same situation. The Apostles were slandered as having taught, that *men might do evil, that good may come*. The doctrine of *free grace* was the immediate occasion of this calumny, which, for the honour and credit of Christianity, demanded the most speedy and effectual refutation. What course did the Apostles take in this exigency? Did they frame a new creed or confession, or insert into an old one a new article, importing, "that no man should do evil, for the sake of  
"procuring

"procuring the greatest imaginable good?" No, they left the calumny to be confronted by the gospel-history, and the tenor of their own writings and conversation, and gave themselves no farther trouble about it.

"We find, however," said Dr. Rutherford, "that St. Paul was led by it [the calumny] to write thus to the Romans, *If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?* and not *rather* (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say) *Let us do evil that good may come!* whose damnation is just." Rom. iii. 7, 8." Charge, p. 2. I do very seriously assure the learned Professor, that it was what the Apostle Paul was led by this calumny to write in this very passage, that led me to write as I did in the Confessional. The only question then between us is, which of the two representations is nearer the truth? The learned Professor's comment (which I hope I may have leave to examine in my turn) is as follows. "Care, therefore, was taken by the Apostles explicitly to condemn this doctrine, and insert an article in opposition to it, if not into any creed or confession distinct from the scriptures, yet into the scriptures themselves." 1. "Care was taken by the Apostles;" by which we are to understand that the epistle to the Romans was composed in a full assembly of the Apostles, and that Paul was no more than the scribe of the synod; by way, I suppose, of a *scripture-precedent* for an article-making convocation. 2. "The Apostles took care explicitly to condemn the doctrine." Not in this passage. St. Paul barely relates that the doctrine was *slanderosly* ascribed to them. The Apostle, indeed, denounces *condemnation* upon the slanderers; but that gives the passage the air of a *canon*, rather than of an *article*; a distinction our learned Professor should be better acquainted with. 3. — "And to insert an article in opposition to it." I should be glad to know *where*? I am sure no such *article* is in these two verses, or in the context to them. The case then, as set forth in the Confessional, stands good, and is not at all affected by any thing the learned Professor hath



In like manner, had the Reformers held up the Bible, and said, "Here is our rule of faith and manners, and by this only we desire to have our doctrine and practice examined;" and had they, as the Apostles did, *acted in conformity to that declaration*, they must for ever have silenced every cavil, and every slander, which the wit of man could have devised against them.

But they were governed by other precedents, and had, no doubt, as much liberty, and equal right, to publish apologies and declarations of their faith, as other churches. This was done on the behalf of the church of *England* by Bishop *Jewel*, and that so much to the satisfaction of the church, that his book passed a long time for the authentic standard of its doctrine. But, whom did it satisfy or convince, except the *English* Protestants? and what peace did it procure for *them*? Let the bulky volume of controversy testify (which is yet to be found in many of our churches) spun out of the bowels of this petty *Apology*, no bigger, at its first appearance, than a three-penny pamphlet.

I hope, however, I shall not be thought to derogate from our thirty-nine articles, if I say,

offered to the contrary. Whereas the representation which the learned Professor gives of what happened among the Apostles upon occasion of this calumny, so far as it depends upon this passage in the epistle to the *Romans*, is wholly *fictitious*; and if he would establish the facts he attempts to build upon it, he must look for some other authority.

that

that this *Apology* did its work, whatever it was, as well as that more authentic system; and, what is more, did it without being subscribed, or adopted as a test, either of ministerial or lay communion. And, had the Reformers contented themselves with this method of defence, they might have pursued it without any complaint, and without any ill consequence to their own friends. The fault we find with them is not for declaring their faith, or confuting the calumnies of the adversary; but setting up these declarations and defences, as tests of orthodoxy; and binding them upon the consciences of those, who had as much right to dissent from *them*, as they had to dissent from Popery: and from this charge, what Bishop *Burnet* hath pleaded on their behalf, will not acquit them.

That a variety of sects arose out of the Reformation, was a matter of fact, which can hardly be considered in the light of a calumny. It neither could nor ought to have been denied. It was the natural effect of great numbers emancipated from the fetters of *Rome*, and restored to the exercise of their private judgment. If any of these sects were impious or extravagant in their tenets, might not some of this be owing to the intolerant spirit of some of the Reformers themselves? who, by narrowing the bottom of Christian communion, and establishing exclusive creeds and confessions, very probably provoked some warm spirits to those excesses, who disdained to

have a new yoke laid upon them, by those very men who had so lately shaken off that of Popery. To say that these impious sectaries spoke out what all Protestants thought, was so ridiculous and absurd, that it deserved no other answer, but an appeal to the *actual separation* of one sort from another.

On the other hand, such sects as differed from each other, and kept within the bounds of sobriety and order, as they manifestly arose out of the Reformation, so were they all upon an equal

*Seckendorf* indeed speaks of "a sect of fanatics which spread in the *Low Countries*, before *Luther* began to attack Popery, and was therefore the offspring of Popery, not of Lutheranism. They kept themselves," he tells us, "from inquiry and punishment, in that they conformed, by a wicked dissimulation, to the external rites of the established worship, with an equal, and sometimes a greater, affectation of sanctity, than others. Some of these had a propensity to atheism, or libertinism; and the people afterwards aspiring to evangelical liberty, these fanatics began, under pretence, to insinuate their profane opinions to them, with more assurance." *Hist. Luth.* b. ii. p. 30. After which, he cites a passage, wherein *Luther* takes notice of them, and accounts for their being so still and quiet under Popery, and so troublesome after the Reformation began, from the case in the parable of the strong man armed, &c. *Luke* xi. 21. — But, without doubt, there was a variety of sects, which owed their rise to the progress of the Reformation, without having any connexion with these papistical fanatics, whom I take to be the same with those mentioned by *Mosheim*, *Compend. View*, vol. ii. p. 15. under the name of *mystics*, of whom it should seem there were some sorts extravagant and iniquitous enough to come within *Seckendorf's* description.



footing of authority. They might, if they pleased, reprobate each other in their several confessions; but they could not say in those confessions, that a variety of sects did not exist, or that such a variety ever would have existed, if the whole Christian world had continued to acknowledge the infallibility of the *Roman* church. The proper defence against such calumnies, was to say, as some of the cooler and more sensible Reformers did say, that after so long a night of ignorance, and dearth of literature, it was no wonder that men should fall upon different explanations of scriptures, which had been so little studied, and so carefully secreted from those who were inclined to study them; and had even been degraded to the level of the decretal epistles in point of importance and authority \*.

\* It is a question of some difficulty, when the church of *Rome* began to derogate from the authority of the scriptures, and to raise their traditions to an equality with them? It is generally supposed that Pope *Nicholas* ordained, that the decretal epistles of the Popes should be of the same authority as the scriptures, about the year 855. But the true case was this: *Nicholas* had said that the decretals of his predecessors ought to conclude some French Bishops, who refused to appeal to the *Roman* see, upon a point controverted and decided among themselves. The Bishops alledged, that these decretals were no part of the canon law. *Nicholas* replied, that if this was a good reason for rejecting the decretals, it would afford a pretence for rejecting the Old and New Testament; for that these were not to be found in the code of the canon. *De Plessis*, *Myst. Iniq. Progress* 31. — Doubtless the argument is a miserable one; but, however, is far from implying, much more

The

The other circumstance which, according to Bishop Burnet, made a copious confession more

from asserting, that the decretals were of equal authority with the scriptures. *Du Plessis* indeed says, that Pope *Agabus* had, 170 years before, pronounced openly, "that all decrees made by the see apostolic, ought to be received as if they had proceeded from St. *Peter's* own mouth." But, as this doctrine had gained no canonical authority in the pontificate of *Nicholas*, it ought not so early to be put to the account of the church. Nor do I indeed find any formal decree to such effect till the year 1415, when the council of *Constance*, in the condemnation of the 38th article of *Wycliff's* heresy, ordained, "that such of the decretal epistles, as should be found, upon examination, to be rightly ascribed to the Popes whose names they bore, should be of equal authority with the epistles of the Apostles." *L'Enfant's Hist. Council of Constance*, vol. I. p. 229.

The qualifying clause of *examination* shews that they were not even then without just suspicions that the collections of *Ivo of Chartres*, *Gratian*, and others, were not wholly authentic. From this period, the sufficiency of the scriptures alone to salvation, became a formal heresy, as appears by the twelfth of the interrogatories exhibited to *Lambert* in *Fox's Martyrology* in the year 1538. Hitherto, however, the scriptures stood upon even ground with papal constitutions; and the inconsistencies between them were kept sufficiently out of sight by depriving the people of the ordinary means of studying the sacred oracles, and entertaining them only with the ignorant and mystical comments of the monks upon them. When this would no longer pass upon mankind, it then became necessary to degrade the scriptures to an inferior class. *Erasmus*, in that colloquy which is intitled *Ἰχθυοφωνία*, canvasses the point, thus. LAN. *Petrus igitur habuit auctoritatem condendi novas leges?* SALSAMENTARIUS: *Habuit.* LAN. *Habuit et Paulus, cum cæteris apostolis?* SALS. *Habuerunt in suis quisque ecclesiis, a Petro, seu Christo commissis.* LAN. *Et Petri successoribus par est potestas cum ipso Petro?* SALS. *Quidni?* LAN. *Tantumdem*

necessary

necessary for the reformed church of England, was, that concealed Papists, being brought to this test, might not creep into the church unawares, and secretly undermine it. "Many" (says his Lordship) "had complied with every alteration, both in King Henry's and King Edward's reign, who not only declared themselves to have been all the while Papists, but became bloody persecutors in Queen Mary's days."

*igitur honoris debetur rescripto Romani pontificis, quantum epistolis Petri: et tantundem constitutionibus episcoporum, quantum epistolis Pauli?* SALS. Equidem arbitror etiam amplius deberi, si præcipiant et legem ferant cum autoritate. LAN. Sed fasne est dubitare, an Petrus et Paulus scripserint afflatu divini Spiritus? SALS. Imo hæreticus sit qui dubitet. LAN. Idem censet de rescriptis et constitutionibus pontificum et episcoporum? SALS. De pontifice censeo, de episcopis ambigo, nisi quod pium est, de nullo perperam suspicari, si res ipsa palam clamitet. That Erasmus would be understood to give his own sense in the person of the fishmonger, is undeniable. With what sincerity, is another matter. This we may depend upon, that he speaks the orthodox sentiments of the church, and gives us to understand, at least, upon what considerations the precedence was given to the papal rescripts above the epistles of Peter and Paul. Probably the condition, *si præcipiant et legem ferant cum autoritate*, might be his own. But who sees not how idle it is to apply any such limitation to those decrees, which are confessedly written by divine inspiration, as Erasmus pretends here to think the pontifical decrees were? This colloquy is perhaps one of the severest satires extant against the superstitions of Popery. But whence had these superstitions their rise or their authority? Even from these inspired rescripts of the Popes. Could not Erasmus see this as well as any man?

There



## 110 THE CONFESSIONAL

There is, indeed, little doubt, but one main view of *K. Edward's* reformers in compiling the articles of religion, and requiring subscription to them, was to exclude all from the ministry who had any tincture of Popery. How ineffectual this measure was for the purpose, the good Bishop here confesses. And, therefore, though this may go far towards excusing *Cranmer* and *Ridley* for contriving such a test, yet it will by no means justify *Queen Elizabeth's* Bishops, who had seen what had happened in *Queen Mary's* days, for continuing such a test any longer. Much less will any such consideration avail to excuse the imposers of subscription in all succeeding times.

*Elizabeth*, indeed, had very different notions from those of *King Edward* and his bishops, concerning reformation. She thought it right to humour the Papists; and, for that purpose, made very considerable abatements in those terms of Protestant communion, which were insisted on in *Edward's* system.

Among other things, the compilers, or the reviewers of *Edward's* articles, struck out a long passage against the *real presence*. "The secret of which, says Bishop *Burnet* himself, was this. "The Queen and her council studied to unite "all into the communion of the church. And it "was alledged, that such an express definition "against a real presence, might drive from the "church many who were still of that persuasion: and,

## THE CONFESSIONAL. iii

"and, therefore, it was thought to be enough to  
 "condemn transubstantiation, and to say, that,  
 "Christ was present after a spiritual manner, and  
 "received by faith. To say more, as it was  
 "judged superfluous, so it might occasion divi-  
 "sion. Upon this, these words were by com-  
 "mon consent left out."

Would one believe, that the same hand which wrote this passage, could raise an apology for our *present* articles, from the necessity of excluding concealed Papists out of the church, by a test with which none of them would comply? I say the *present* articles, for nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose that the compilers of any *other* articles should profit by their experience of what had happened in the reigns of *Henry, Edward, and Mary*. These inconsistencies, however, are unavoidable, even by the greatest and best of men, when they find themselves under a ne-

\* *Hist. Reform.* vol. II. p. 406. This mutilation of the article concerning the *real presence*, was one of those things which drove the ancient Puritans out of the established church. *Hist. Reform.* vol. III. Collection, p. 334. And, in these latter times, had given occasion to compliment the church of *England*, as holding the *real presence*, as well as her sister of *Rome*. See *Appendix* to *Dr. Parr's* life of *Archbishop Usher*, p. 11. c. q. f. This is likewise one principal circumstance, which both Popish and Protestant writers have brought to shew the very little difference there is between the churches of *Rome* and *England*. Vid. *Francisci a Sta. Clara* (alias *Davenport*) *Exposit. paraphrasticam in articulos confessionis Anglicæ*. In Art. 28. and *Heylin's* *Introduction to the Life of Archbishop Laud*.

cessity

cessity of defending ecclesiastical institutions, only because they are *established*.

Hitherto we meet with nothing in this introduction, to justify our reformers in establishing these articles of faith and doctrine, save only the bare excuse of following the fashion of other churches. The bishop himself has as good as confessed, that there is no scriptural authority for any such practice. It has likewise been shewn, that with respect to the particular occasions of the church of *England*, the publication of these articles had no effect, either in silencing the calumnies of Papists, or keeping such of them out of the church as were inclined, either wholly to temporize, or to meet the church of *England* half way.

We might then save ourselves the trouble of entering into any debate, concerning the extent of that authority by which our articles were established, and subscription to them enjoined. I will, however, make no scruple to affirm, that no such authority is vested in the church. Farther than this I shall not enquire, otherwise than as the good Bishop leads me the way.

His Lordship observes, "that whatever may be the sanctions of a law, it does not alter the nature of things, nor oblige the consciences of the subjects, unless they come under the same persuasion." This is particularly true of any such law, as infringes upon the privileges to which Christians are intitled under the profession  
of



of the Gospel; and this, we say, is the case of all laws enjoining assent and consent to human creeds and confessions, which appear not to those, of whom such assent and consent are required, to be in perfect agreement with the word of God. It is therefore of no sort of consequence, whether such creeds and confessions are established by civil authority, or by synods and convocations of professed theologues. Upon Protestant principles, neither the one nor the other can encroach so much as a straw-breadth, upon the rights of private judgment, in matters of faith or doctrine.

His Lordship indeed would seem to say something in vindication of our Princes, for interposing at the Reformation in a point so extremely tender and delicate; insinuating, that they did not pretend to judge in points of faith, or to decide controversies. "The part," says he, "they had in the Reformation was only this, — "being satisfied with the grounds on which it went, they received it themselves, and enacted it for the people; and this, in his Lordship's judgment, they had as much right to do, as every private man had to chuse for himself, and believe according to his reason and conscience."

I presume, his Lordship might mean, that our Princes were satisfied with the grounds of Reformation, by those churchmen whose province it was to examine them. But here, I apprehend, his Lordship, by an ambiguity of expression, hath

#### 114 THE CONFESSIONAL

hath put the change upon his readers, and perhaps upon himself. The true ground of Reformation was, the necessity of being relieved from the incroachments, impositions, and oppressions of Popery. The abolition of these grievances, our Princes (including the legislature) had not only a right, but were in duty bound, to enact for the people. When Popery was out of the way, the scriptures became the rule of religion; and to say that these sacred oracles did not contain a sufficient formulary of faith and doctrine (to let alone forms of worship) without explanations of artificial theology, is degrading them once more to that unworthy state of subserviency to human rescripts and decrees, from which the Reformers pretended at least to rescue them. Had our Princes, therefore, pursued the true grounds of Reformation with uniformity, they should have discountenanced the introduction of scholastic doctrines and articles of faith of man's device, *in their own doctors*, as well as in those of the Popish persuasion. They could not be ignorant, that an *English* convocation had no more right to prescribe to the people directories of faith, distinct from the scriptures, than an *Italian* council: or that a sincere *English* Protestant could no more make his Bishop his Proxy in matters of Faith and Conscience, than he could transfer his civil allegiance, which he had sworn to the King or Queen of *England*, to the Pope of *Rome*.

Both

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 115

Both the civil and ecclesiastical authority were on this, as on all other like occasions, under the controul of the word of God. The word of God had given a liberty to the disciples of *Jesus*, which no earthly power had any right either to take away or abridge. It was indeed the business and the duty, both of the civil and ecclesiastical power, to promote Christian edification among the people, for which the word of God had made sufficient room, without breaking in upon Christian liberty.

It is true, this Christian liberty might be abused by absurd and licentious men, so as to endanger the peace, and subvert the order, of civil society. Here the civil magistrate has his right of interposing reserved to him by the Gospel itself. A consideration, which, as it fully justifies Christian Princes in their demolition of Popery, so likewise does it reserve to them an authority to restrain all religious corruptions and extravagances which have a *like* effect, and break out into overt acts of opposition to the righteous regulations of civil society: which however never can be affected, where any man or any body of men demand or attempt *no more* than to be permitted to believe and worship God, peaceably and sincerely, in their own way.

The good Bishop would have us believe, as hath been observed, that the system which took place at the Reformation, was only barely *enacted* by our Princes, who, according to him, left it to



the church to judge in points of faith, and to decide controversies. How the fact stood in some periods, I will not stay to enquire. This I know, that in the reign of Queen *Elizabeth* the orthodox *Law* was, that "*Religion being variable according to the pleasure of succeeding Princes, that which at one time is held for orthodox, may at another be accounted superstitious, &c.*"<sup>b</sup>. A maxim which was exemplified so often, in the reigns of *Henry*, *Edward*, and *Elizabeth*, and in so many instances, where the church, as such, had not the least concern, that it may very well counterbalance the few cases the Bishop may be supposed to have had in his eye, when he ventured this assertion with the public.

But these are points, which we are now no longer permitted to debate with the powers in being. The state and the church are cordially agreed to continue these articles as standards of orthodoxy, and the subscription to them, as an indispensable condition of holding any preferment in the church of *England*. Still they are points very proper to be debated with an honest man's own heart: and from this sort of self-controversy no honest man is precluded; I had almost said can well be excused. For, if the Christian religion is of divine authority, and our future happiness depends, in any degree, upon having its documents pure, and unmixed with human commandments and traditions, the man, who is in a

<sup>b</sup> *Duke's Law of Charitable Uses*, p. 131, 132.

## THE CONFESSIONAL 117

capacity to examine into the truth, must be inexcusably rash, should he receive and embrace doctrines unsupported by these sacred oracles, merely because they are established by the powers of this world.

To help us out of the doubts and difficulties which may arise in the course of such an examination, Bishop *Burnet's* next endeavours are laid out in explaining, 1. The *use* of the Articles; and, 2. The *importance* of the Clergy's subscribing to them.

By the *use* of the articles, one would suppose, at first sight, his Lordship meant their *utility* to the church. But, however, without entering farther into this matter than we have already seen, and after a short digression, importing that they are not merely articles of union and peace, he proceeds to tell us, that, "with respect to the laity, they are only articles of church-communion."

But I would desire to know in what instance our articles ever had any operation this way? What layman is or ever was required either to subscribe, or solemnly declare his assent to them, as a qualification for communion with the church of England<sup>d</sup>? *Physicians* and *Civilians* indeed

<sup>d</sup> Dr. *Rutherford* represents me as "supposing here Bishop *Burnet* to mean, that *all laymen* are required either to subscribe or solemnly declare their assent to the articles, as a qualification for communion with the church in which they are established." I wish it were not below the Professor's dignity to endeavour to *understand* his opponents before he un-

subscribe them, to entitle themselves to academical degrees, and the latter sometimes to qualify

dertakes to *represent* them. The plain obvious case is this. Bishop *Burnet* calls our articles, so far as the laity are concerned with them, *articles of church-communion*. In examining whether they really are such or no, I enquire how they operate upon the laity for the purpose of admitting them to, or excluding them from, communion with the church in which they are established. I prove that they have *no* operation this way, by shewing that the laity in general are actually admitted to communion with the church, not only without being required either to subscribe or declare their assent to them, but without being asked a single question concerning the articles. Hence I conclude, they are *not*, with respect to the laity, articles of church-communion. Farther than this I neither did nor thought I had occasion to enquire what was Bishop *Burnet's* meaning. It was sufficient for me to have shewn, that whatever it was, it depended upon a supposition, contrary to matter of fact. But Dr. *Rutherford* hath found out the Bishop's meaning, and hath very graciously adopted it; and thus explains it: "Every layman, who is a member of any church, not only if he is persuaded, that all the propositions contained in its established confession are true, but, if he thinks that none of them are erroneous in so high a degree, that he cannot hold communion with such as profess them, he is obliged to continue in its communion." *Charge*, p. 13. I wish the learned Professor hath not here supposed Bishop *Burnet* to mean what he did not mean. But without enquiring at this time into Bishop *Burnet's* meaning, let us consider how the Professor's system will be affected by the meaning he hath here avowed. As he hath stated the case, a layman is *obliged* to hold communion with the church of which he is a member, although he should think *every* article of the confession of that church to be *erroneous*, provided he does not think *any* article or *any* proposition in the confession to be *erroneous in so high a degree*, that he cannot hold communion with such as profess it. Here it is observable, that the obligation to hold communion, does not *wholly* arise from the subject-themselves



## THE CONFSSIONAL. 119

themselves for ecclesiastical offices. But, suppose any of these men should choose to forego the degree, or the office for which he is a candidate, rather

matter of the articles, or the *high* or the *low* degree of errors contained in them, but chiefly from the *extent of the layman's charity*. A layman may be of that catholic spirit, that he shall think himself obliged to hold communion with pious and well-meaning persons, even though he should be persuaded that all the articles of the confession, or at least the major part of them, professed by those persons, are *unscriptural*, and some of them perhaps *antiscritural*, than which there can hardly be among Protestants an higher degree of error. Such laymen there have been in the world; and when that happens to be the case in any degree, what can such layman have to do with the articles of any confession, or the articles with him? A great deal, if we believe the learned Professor. For in the very next paragraph we are informed, that "the governors of the church understand the layman to be bound in conscience to believe and practise what is contained in the confession [of the church, we must suppose, with which he is in communion] as much as the clergyman who subscribes, and solemnly assents to it." If the governors of the church are right in so understanding, they must *understand* the articles of the confession to be as much a *test* to the layman, as they are to the clergyman. And this being the case, the governors should seem to have as much right to exclude the *unassenting* layman from communion, as they have to exclude the *unsubscribing* clergyman from the office of teaching. And yet, by the Professor's own state of the case, church-governors can have no such right. For the layman may *dissent* from *all* the articles of the established confession in a certain degree, and that a very *high* degree, and still be obliged to continue in communion with the church in which they are established. He is left to his own judgment, or rather to his own charity, for the extent of the obligation. And what have church-governors or church-confessions to do with that? Either therefore the articles of the established con-

## 120 THE CONFESSIONAL.

than comply with this condition (and some such I have known), would this be a sufficient reason for excluding him from church-communion? or was ever any one excluded upon any such account?

The Bishop indeed says, that the 5<sup>th</sup> canon, which declares "those to be excommunicated *ipso facto* who shall affirm any of these articles to be "erroneous, or such as he may not with a good "conscience subscribe to, extends to the whole "body of the people, laity as well as clergy." I apprehend, that a refusal to subscribe the articles, in the cases abovementioned, amounts to something equivalent to the *affirmation* censured in the canon; not to mention laymen of great name and note, who, both in word and writing, have affirmed as much in plain terms. And yet who ever heard that any of these were prohibited from communicating with the church on this account, or were ever asked a single question upon the subject? Either therefore his Lordship must have been mistaken in his interpretation of this canon, or here is a relaxation of discipline in the church, extremely dishonourable to her governors, and highly scandalous to her members. Be this as it may, this is a matter of fact, which proves

cession are not to *such* a layman, nor consequently to *any* layman, articles of church-communion; or we have here two counter-obligations, which I fear the learned Professor, with all his dexterity at *distinguishing*, will never be able to reconcile.

to a demonstration, that our thirty-nine Articles, considered as articles of church-communion, are of no manner of use to the church, or significance to the laity. Some of our divines, indeed, have attempted to bring the laity under this obligation of assenting to article-doctrine, by way of *implication*. Others, however, have frankly exonerated them from any such bond, and have left church-communion upon a more righteous and reasonable foundation, by a way of reasoning, which, to me at least, looks like condemning the church for insisting on clerical subscriptions, as well as laical assent, to human doctrines and articles of faith \*. But, however that may be, the

\* Dr. *Stebbing* is among the former sort, who blushes not to say, "there is the same need of human explications of scripture-words, with respect to lay-communion, that there is with respect to ministerial communion. For the holding the faith of the Gospel, necessary in both cases, and a *general belief* that the scriptures are the word of God, is no evidence of *this*, in either." *Rational Enquiry*, p. 77. No evidence of what? I suppose he means, no evidence of communion with any particular church which espouses these human explications. More shame for the church which requires more and other terms of communion, than Christ himself required. But, if we may believe Bishop *Bull*, this church is not the church of *England*: which, according to his Lordship, "does not require the laity to subscribe the articles, though they are as much obliged to acknowledge the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, as the most learned doctors." That is to say, as much obliged as Christians, and in *foro conscientiae*, to acknowledge those fundamentals (not as they are contained in the thirty-nine articles, for then they would be obliged to subscribe, or give their public assent to those articles, but) as they lye in



subscription of the clergy stands, it seems, upon a different footing, and, as a matter of more consequence, will demand a more particular examination.

The Bishop begins this part of the case with observing, that "the title of the articles bears, "that they were agreed upon in convocation, for *the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and the stablishing consent touching true religion.* Where," says his Lordship, "it is evident that a consent *in opinion* is designed." Namely (if common language is the vehicle of common sense) such a *consent*, as is absolutely exclusive of all diversities of opinions. Now the case standing thus, and the title of the articles, as well as the canonical form of subscription, remaining the same to this very hour, what possible pretence can there be for construing the act of subscription into a simple declaration of the subscribers positive opinion, in a certain *literal* and *grammatical* sense, different from the *literal grammatical* sense of another subscriber? The casuistry that allows different men to subscribe the same set of articles, which, as they all agree, were intended to prevent

the scriptures. Which plainly implies, that the church of England thinks this *general acknowledgment* sufficient evidence of the communion of her lay-members with her. Dr. Stebbing may wish it were otherwise, and, when he wrote his *Rational Enquiry*, might hope the laity, at some time, would be bound to assent to these human explications. But, I trust, he will not live to be gratified.

diver-

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 143

diversities of opinions, not only in *different*, but even in *contrary* senses, must be weak and contemptible, beyond any thing of the kind that ever came from the Jesuits. These pious fathers, in all such cases, bring their matters to bear at a pinch, by the help of equivocation and mental reserves. We despise and disown this practice as infamous; and yet, it seems, we can condescend to arrive at the same sort of ends, by quibbling upon the ambiguous signification of words.

Alas for pity! that, to explain and defend this mean, unmanly expedient, should fall to the share of this illustrious Prelate, contrary to his own generous sentiments; as too plainly appears from the following passage, cited from a piece he was obliged to publish in his own vindication, while the sheets of his *Exposition* were hardly dry from the press.

“ I do not deny but men of the *Calvinist* persuasion may think they have cause given them “ to complain of my leaving the articles open to “ those of another persuasion. But those of the “ *Arminian* side” [who, by the way, were the men who bore the most tyrannous hate against him] “ must be men of a peculiar tincture, who except “ to it” [his *Exposition*] “ on that account: “ though, without such enlargement of sense, “ their subscribing them does not appear to agree “ so well with THEIR OPINIONS, and with COM- “ MON INGENUITY †.”

† Bishop *Burnet's* Remarks on the Examination of his *Exposition* of the Second Article of our Church, p. 3.

But

But what cause could the good Bishop give the *Calvinists* to complain, if there really was any good foundation for this *enlargement of sense*, either in the original design of the articles, or in any subsequent decision of competent authority? The *Arminian* sense is certainly not the original sense of the articles: nor is it a sense they will *naturally* receive. It is a sense which was never once in the heads of those who compiled them, nor of those who gave them the sanction of that act of parliament, under which they are subscribed to this present hour.

But, it seems, there is a *royal declaration* at the head of our articles, which makes a considerable abatement in the strictness of our subscriptions, and leaves room, in express terms, for these different *literal grammatical* senses.

It remains then that we examine the validity of this *declaration*, upon which so great a stress is laid; wherein we shall endeavour to be as accurate, and at the same time as candid, as possible.

Bishop *Burnet* tells us, that this declaration was set forth by King *Charles I.* "and little doubt "can be made," says his Lordship, "but it was "prepared by Archbishop *Laud*."

That King *Charles I.* published a *declaration* along with the articles in the year 1630, we have the testimony of Dr. *Nicholls*<sup>b</sup>, who however

<sup>a</sup> Remarks, p. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Dr. *Nicholls's* Commentary on the Articles, p. 3.



cites a passage from it which is not to be found in the declaration referred to by Bishop *Burnet*; that is to say, in the declaration which in his time was, and still is, prefixed to our thirty-nine articles. The consequence is, that King *Charles's* declaration is dropped long ago, and has no authority to decide any thing in the present question.

The declaration which stands before the thirty-nine articles in our present books, is more generally believed to have been first published by King *James I.* and is the same from which, Dr. *Nicholls* says, Bishop *Burnet* drew his inference, "that an article being conceived in such general words, that it can admit of different literal and grammatical senses, even when the senses are plainly contrary to each other, both sides may subscribe the articles with a good conscience, and without any equivocation."

But Dr. *Nicholls* believed that the force of *this* declaration did not, nor was designed to extend beyond his [King *James's*] time. If this be true, this declaration has no right to the place it occupies. It is of no use or significance to us of the present times; nor could any rule of interpretation be either inferred from it, or authorised by it.

Dr. *Nicholls*, indeed, gives no particular reason for his judgment. There was no occasion. The very face of the declaration shews that he had very good grounds for what he said.

The

## 126 THE CONFESSIONAL.

The King set forth his declaration by virtue of his being supreme head of the church. But acts of supremacy, when unconfirmed by the legislature, are merely *personal*, and die with the particular Prince whose acts they are, unless they are revived, by his successors, with the same formalities which were observed at their first appearance.

The declaration before us is destitute of all these formalities, even with respect to the Prince (whoever he was) by whom it was at first set forth. There is no royal signature at the head of it; no attestation of his Majesty's command, by any of the great officers of the crown; no mention of the time when, or the place whence, it issued. And that it has never been acknowledged by any succeeding Prince, is evident from the following circumstance, namely, that, during the reign of Queen *Anne*, the title of it stood invariably as it had done from the first, *viz.* HIS *Majesty's Declaration*, which would not have been the case, had HER Majesty adopted this rescript as her own act, authenticated by the specific ratification of her royal predecessors.

On another hand, the language of this declaration is such, as is absolutely inconsistent with the fundamental principles of our present happy constitution.

"We will not endure," says the declaration, "any varying, or departing, in the least degree, from the doctrine and discipline of the church  
" of

"of *England* now established." This might tally well enough with the politics of a *James* or a *Charles*; but if our princes and people, in after-times, had persisted in not enduring the least departure from the *doctrine* of the church of *England*, particularly as it is exhibited in the homily against *wilful rebellion*, what must have become of us at the *Revolution*? Where had been our acts of settlement and limitation of the crown to King *William*, and the present royal family? If the *discipline* of the church had continued *invariable*, not only the act tolerating protestant dissenters had never seen the light, but the churches censure, in his Majesty's *commission ecclesiastical*, had been in full force, not to mention many other wholesome correctives, provided for *puritans* and *heretics* by the pious care of Archbishop *Laud*.

The declaration, indeed, remits the offenders against it for their punishment, to the said *commission ecclesiastical*, as if it was still in full force. But this only serves to betray its weakness and impotence, and to shew, that it has no more authority to licence any one practice, or to prescribe any one duty to *British* subjects, than an edict of the *French King*.

<sup>1</sup> See these questions answered, and the point they relate to handled by a masterly writer, in a pamphlet intitled, *A plain and proper answer to this question, Why does not the Bishop of Clogher resign his preferments?* Printed for Shuckburgh, 1753.



Bishop *Burnet*, in the pamphlet above cited, gives the following account of the occasion of publishing this declaration. "The *Arminian* party (as they were called) was then favoured. To these it was objected, that they departed from the true sense of the articles. But it was answered by them, that, since they took the articles in their literal and grammatical sense, they did not prevaricate. And to support this, that declaration was set forth."

Here it is not denied, that the *literal* and *grammatical* sense of the *Arminians* was different from the *true* sense of the articles. But how could men subscribe to articles as *true*, when they could not deny that they subscribed to them in a sense that was *not* the *true* sense of them, without prevarication? If therefore the declaration was not set forth to support *prevarication*, what was it intended to support?

His Lordship, I suppose, may have given a true, though no very honourable account of the occasion of this declaration; but it was an occasion that was given, and might be taken, in the latter part of King *James's* reign, as likely as in any part of King *Charles's*. There is indeed no evidence that *James* ever turned *Arminian* in principle. This, however, was the party that stuck to him in his measures and his projects, and which it became necessary for him, on that account, to humour, and to accommodate, by every expedient that might set them in a respectable light

light with the people, without bringing any reflection upon his own consistency. Whoever considers the quibbling and equivocal terms in which this instrument is drawn, will, I am persuaded, observe the distress of a man divided between his principles and his interests; that is, of a man exactly in the situation of King *James I.* In the three last years of his reign.

*Charles I.* was an avowed *Arminian*, upon the supposition that all *Calvinists* were enemies to his kind of policy, both in church and state. His father's declaration had not wrought the end proposed by the *Arminians*, and therefore, to make them easy, in the year 1626, he issued a proclamation, enjoining silence to all parties with respect to the points then in dispute. "The effects of which proclamation, says *Rushworth*, how equally soever intended, became the stopping of the *Puritans* mouths, and an uncontroled liberty to the tongues and pens of the *Arminian* party<sup>k</sup>." Which is easily accounted for, when it is remembered, that the restless and factious *Laud* had the execution of this proclamation in his hands.

This partiality brought on so much oppression and ill-treatment of the party obnoxious to the court, that the House of Commons complained of it in their remonstrance against the Duke of *Buckingham*, June 1628<sup>l</sup>; and not long after,

<sup>k</sup> Hist. Collections, vol. I. p. 412, 413.

<sup>l</sup> *Rushworth*, vol. I. p. 621.

namely,

## 136 THE CONFESSIONAL.

namely, January 28th, 1628-9, upon the motion of Sir John Elliot, entered into this remarkable VOW :

*We the Commons in Parliament assembled, do claim; protest, and avow for truth, the sense of the articles of religion, which were established by parliament in the thirteenth year of our late Queen Elizabeth, which, by the public act of the church of England, and by the general and current expositions of the writers of our church, have been delivered unto us. And we reject the sense of the Jesuits and Arminians, and all others, wherein they differ from us<sup>m</sup>.*

Whether either the King or the House of Commons, in a separate capacity, have a power to interpret the articles of religion for the people; will admit of a dispute; but that this vow, or protestation, considered as an act of state, hath greatly the advantage of the declaration in question, in point of authority, will admit of none. It is equivalent at least to any other resolution of the House of Commons. It is found among the most authentic records of parliament. And whatever force or operation it had the moment it was published, the same it has to this hour; being never revoked or repealed in any succeeding parliament, nor containing any one particular, which is not in perfect agreement with every part of our present constitution, civil and religious.

<sup>m</sup> Rushworth, vol. I. p. 649.



On the other hand, here is a nameless, and, for ought that any one knows, a spurious *declaration*. It is a problem to this day in what reign it was set forth; which is a circumstance hardly possible, if any original record of it were forth-coming, with those solemn attestations necessary to give it the weight and authority of a royal mandate."

"It is not easy to suppose but there must be some printed copy of this *Declaration* still extant, of sufficient antiquity to ascertain, whether it was originally set out by King *James I.* or King *Charles I.* And it were to be wished, that if any gentleman hath such ancient copy in his custody, he would favour the public with an account of it. On the other hand, it is next to incredible, that if any such copy had been easily to be found, two such men as Bishop *Burnet* and Dr. *Nicholls* should differ so widely in their accounts of it. The former ascribes this *Declaration* to *Charles*, the latter to *James*. And that *Declaration* which Dr. *Nicholls* ascribes to King *Charles I.* cites the Bishop of *Chester's* judgment concerning the wisdom and moderation of the church of *England*; of which Bishop, or his judgment, there is not the least mention in the *Declaration* now prefixed to our articles, which Dr. *Nicholls*, and I think rightly, ascribes to King *James*. The inducement I have to agree with Dr. *Nicholls*, is as follows: In 1628, King *Charles*, in a proclamation, calling in all the copies of Montague's *Appello Casarem*, declares that, "out of his care to maintain the church in the  
"unity of true religion, and the bond of peace, to prevent un-  
"necessary disputes, he had lately caused the articles of religion  
"to be reprinted, as a rule for avoiding diversities of opinions." *Russett*, vol. I. p. 634. Now it is absurd to suppose, that the bare reprinting the 39 articles *only*, would answer any such end, or, indeed, that copies of the articles should be so very scarce, as to require a new edition for the purposes mentioned. Hence I conjecture, that King *Charles* reprinted his father's *Declaration* (the same we now have) along with the articles, as more copies of the articles *then* extant undoubtedly wanted it,

Not to mention those particulars in it, which are plainly repugnant to the present establishment both in church and state.

It is indeed surprizing, that Bishop *Burnet*, who well knew from what court-intrigues this declaration took its rise; how grievously it was complained of by the Calvinists, and how effectually it was opposed and disannulled by the above-mentioned vow, should lay the least stress upon it. But not more surprizing, than that he should ascribe the pacifying the disputes of those times, to "men's general acquiescence, in being

than had it. That this Declaration was published along with these reprinted articles, appears from Sir *John Elliot's* speech in parliament, the January following, who cites it thus: "It is said," (namely, in a Declaration he had just mentioned) "if there be any difference of opinion concerning the *seasonable* [perhaps *reasonable*] "interpretation of the 39 articles, the bishops and clergy in the convocation have power to dispute it, and to order which way they please." *Russetworth*, vol. I. p. 649. Now this particular is actually to be found in his Majesty's Declaration, as we now have it. You will say, perhaps, "And why might not this originally be King *Charles's* own Declaration?" I answer, it might be so: but if it was, it is unaccountable his Majesty should not say, in the passage above-cited, he had caused a Declaration, made and published by himself, for the purposes mentioned in the Proclamation, to be printed and published along with a new edition of the 39 articles. Whereas, if you suppose that the Declaration had been published, and prefixed to the articles in his father's reign, there would be no occasion for a particular specification of that rescript, distinct from the articles. It would be reprinted along with the articles of course, and be considered as a part of the book of articles, as I suppose it is by some people, at this very day.

"left to subscribe the articles according to their "literal and grammatical sense." History gives us little reason to believe, that those disputes were pacified in any degree worth mentioning. And if the disputants went off from their *fierceness*, it was only because of the tyrannical restraint put upon *one side*. But of what nature and extent the acquiescence has been in other respects, is sufficiently evident, in almost every controversial book that has been written in or since those days, where the least occasion or colour has been given to the disputant, to reproach the adverse party with the insincerity of his subscription.

The Declaration standing upon this infirm ground, it would be doing it too much honour to examine the contents of it, and to shew what is really the truth; and if there is in it either consistency, or common sense, it binds men to the avoidance of diversities of opinion, and allows of as little latitude of senses, as the title of the articles itself: unless there may be two, or two hundred different senses of an article, each of which may be the TRUE and USUAL, as well as the LITERAL sense of it.

There was a time indeed, when Bishop *Burnet* accounted for the laxity of the articles upon a different footing, which, however, he has not ventured to mention in this Introduction. In the second volume of his History of the Reforma-



tion, p. 169, he informs his readers, "that upon  
 " the progress of the Reformation, the *German*  
 " writers, particularly *Osiander*, *Illyricus*, and  
 " *Amstorfius*, grew too peremptory, and not only  
 " condemned the *Helvetian* churches for differing  
 " from them in the manner of Christ's presence  
 " in the sacrament, but were severe to one ano-  
 " ther for lesser punctilios, and were *at this time*  
 " exercising the patience of the great and learned  
 " *Melancthon*, because he thought, that in things  
 " in their own nature indifferent, they ought to  
 " have complied with the Emperor. *This made*  
 " *those in England resolve on composing these articles*  
 " *with great temper in many such points.*"

The good Bishop, I am afraid, says a good deal of this at random, or at least upon plausible conjecture. A few pages before, he is evidently under great uncertainty, who compiled these articles. "He had often found it said, that they  
 " were framed by *Cranmer* and *Ridley*; which he  
 " thinks more probable, than that they were giv-  
 " en out to several bishops and divines, to deli-  
 " ver their opinions concerning them." But, however, it might be the other way. And, under this uncertainty, who can pretend to say with what *temper* they were composed, or by what views or considerations the composers were influenced? However, that they learned any moderation from these inedifying contests in *Germany*, or had respect to the sufferings of *Melancthon* in *temper*  
*pering*

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 135

pering these articles, is rendered utterly incredible by the following facts.

1. At the time referred to, viz. 1551, *Melancthon* was employed by *Maurice* Elector of *Saxony*, to draw up a confession of faith, to be exhibited at the council of *Trent*, on the behalf of the *Saxon* churches. In consequence of which, the principal divines, and presidents of those churches, being assembled at *Leipsic*, this confession, which was no other than that of *Augsburgh* somewhat enlarged, was read to them, and subscribed by them, with great unanimity, and with very little opposition. So that this season, with respect to *Melancthon's* dispute with *Illyricus*, &c. was a season of great tranquillity, the troubles with which his patience, and that of his brethren, was then exercised, being chiefly from the Papists.

2. In the year 1548, the second of King *Edward's* reign, "Archbishop *Cranmer* was driving on a design for the better uniting the Protestant churches, viz. by having one common confession and harmony of faith and doctrine, drawn up out of the pure word of God, which they might all own and agree in." *Melancthon*, among others, was consulted by *Cranmer* on this occasion; and encouraged the Archbishop to go on with his design, advising him, however, "to avoid all ambiguities of expression; saying, that, in the church, it was best to call a spade a spade, and not to cast ambiguous words be-

<sup>o</sup> *Hospinian*. Hist. Sacrament. vol. ii. p 373.

"fore posterity, as an apple of contention." This advice he inculcates in a second letter, proposing, "that nothing might be left under general terms, but expressed with all the perspicuity and distinctness imaginable." Some, it seems, thought it might be more conducive to peace, to suffer some difficult and controverted points to pass under dubious expressions, or in the very words of scripture, without any particular decisive sense or explanation imposed upon them. "This *Melancthon* was against, saying, "that for his part, he loved not labyrinths; and "that therefore, all his study was, that whatsoever matters he undertook to treat of, they "might appear plain and unfolded. That this "was, indeed, the practice of the council of *Trent*, which, therefore, made such crafty decrees, that they might defend their errors by things ambiguously spoken. But that this sophistry ought to be far from the church. That "there is no absurdity in truth rightly propounded: and that this goodness and perspicuity of things is greatly inviting, wheresoever there "be good minds P."

Undoubtedly *Melancthon* was highly to be commended for his openness and sincerity. But assuredly the method proposed by him, was not the way to compose differences of opinions, or to bring disagreeing parties to any temper upon difficult and controvertible points.

<sup>p</sup> *Strype's Memorials of Archbishop Cranmer*, p. 407, 408.



Mr. *Strype* thinks it probable, that *Cranmer* had consulted *Melancthon* on this very point, and judges that *Cranmer* was the *certain good man*, mentioned by *Bucer* to *Peter Martyr*, as of opinion, "that ambiguous forms of speech, which might be taken in a larger acceptation, was the best means of ending the great controversy concerning the real presence, and of restoring peace to the church. Now, whoever *had not*, *Cranmer* certainly *had* a principal hand in framing *K. Edward's* articles; and how likely it was that he should compose them with any *temper*, in view either of the sentiments or the situation of *Melancthon*, the foregoing particulars may serve to shew.

3. At the very time that *Melancthon* wrote these letters to *Cranmer*, he was in the heat of the dispute he had with *Illyricus*, concerning the concessions he thought should be made to the Emperor, in reference to the scheme of pacification called the *Interim*. These concessions, however, concerned only some rites and ceremonies, which he thought were void of superstition and idolatry; but which, in the opinion of *Illyricus*, ought to be opposed to the death. But, for matters of doctrine, *Melancthon* was as stiff and peremptory as *Illyricus* himself. He was the person who managed the conferences on the subject of the *Interim* with the Emperor's Commissioners; and particularly wrote the *Censure* upon it; and, indeed, from the year 1544 to the end of his life,

## 138 THE CONFESSIONAL.

constantly maintained that all matters of faith and doctrine, and particularly upon the sacrament, should be clearly expressed, and without any sophistry or ambiguity whatsoever.

4. Bishop Burnet would have done well, to have specified what those points were, upon which these

<sup>1</sup> Bayle's Dict. MELANCTHON, Rem. [L], and in the text. See likewise *Hospinian*, Hist. Sacrament, under the year 1548, and downwards. *Ludovicus Camerarius*, in the epistle dedicatory, prefixed to his edition of *Hubert Languet's* letters to his [*Camerarius's*] father and grandfather, published in 1646, after taking notice that *Melancthon* opened himself to *Languet* on the subject of the *Eucharist* with the most unreserved sincerity, adds this remarkable passage, with respect, as it should seem, to some suspicions that *Melancthon* had concealed or dissembled his sentiments on that article. *Neque enim obscurum, et à Cl. Peucero aliisque accuratè demonstratum est scriptis publicis, quæ in eucharisticâ illâ controversiâ, post accuratiorem cum Ecolampadio disquisitionem Philippi [Melancthonis] fuerit sententia, quam usque ad pium suum obitum constanter retinuit; quamvis eam non omnibus promiscuè disceptantibus (certe suo consilio usus) aperuerit. Cum contentiosis vero Theologis de illo argumento rixari publice nunquam voluit. Semper enim provocavit ad doctorem et piorum virorum colloquia, aut ad communes synodos, in quibus non daretur locus sophisticis altercationibus.* Synods of Protestant Divines were then, we will suppose, in the simplicity of their childhood. In 1549 *Languet* went to live with *Melancthon*, whose situation, from the death of *Luther* in 1546, to the hour of his own death, was, with respect to his estimation in the reformed churches, most critical; so that his occasional caution, in not entering into public disputation with contentious divines, and his professing a deference for the judgment of other pious and learned men, were marks of his wisdom, as well as of his unaffected modesty, and gave him the authority and influence with the Protestants in general which he so justly merited.

articles

articles were composed with so great temper. Nothing of this appears upon the face of the articles themselves. As the Bishop has stated the case, it would be most natural to look for this temper, where the doctrine of the *real presence* is set forth. But, in this point, K. *Edward's* article was so rigid, that the reviewers of our system under Queen *Elizabeth* thought it proper to mollify it, by leaving out a long passage, where the decision of this matter was thought too peremptory, at least for her Majesty's political purposes. And *Hospinian* has quoted this very article, to shew, that it was in perfect agreement with *Melancthon's* doctrine on the same subject. Nor indeed can it be proved by any circumstance in those articles, that the compilers of them did not clearly and decisively express themselves, upon every subject they meddled with, in the aptest and precise terms the language of those times afforded.

And thus I take my leave of Bishop *Burnet's* Introduction; leaving the reader to reflect upon the disagreeable situation, in which a man of this worthy Bishop's learning and disposition must be placed, when it is required of him to maintain, what, in his own private judgment, he is conscious cannot be maintained, without such chicane and subterfuge, as it must be most grievous to an ingenuous mind to employ. I shall now proceed to shew the ill effects of such mistaken endeavours in some still more remarkable instances.



## CHAP. V.

*A View of the embarrassed and fluctuating Casuistry of those Divines, who do not approve of, or differ from, Bishop BURNET'S Method of justifying Subscription to the XXXIX Articles of the Church of England.*

**B**ishop Burnet was never a favourite with that part of the clergy who style themselves *orthodox*. He was apt to speak his mind freely concerning such men and such things in the church, as he thought wanted reformation. His *Pastoral Care*, wherein he censured the manners, as well as the spirit and qualifications of his contemporary churchmen with little reserve, and laid down rules which very few were inclined to follow, created a sort of offence which was never to be forgiven. And such was their resentment, that they disdained to be obliged to him, even for his friendly endeavours to save their credit, by pointing out the only method of subscribing the articles, which would not expose a large majority of them to the reproach of prevarication.

Accordingly, some short time after his Lordship's *Exposition* was made public, the Lower House of Convocation fell upon it with the utmost fury, as a performance full of scandal to the church, and danger to religion. But, being happily restrained from proceeding to extremities in  
their

their corporate capacity, the charge was delivered over to a single hand, who, as they had good reason to believe, would make the most of it with the public, and who, in the name of his brethren, pursued the Exposition with sufficient spleen, in a book intituled, *A Prefatory Discourse to an Examination of a late Book, intituled, An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England*, by Gilbert Bishop of Sarum, 1702 <sup>a</sup>.

This writer's design being to shew, that the thirty-nine Articles were framed to prevent *diversities of opinions*, and, at the same time, to prove the wisdom and righteousness of such a measure, it became necessary for him to appeal to the matter of fact, which he very undauntedly does in the following words.

"To the honour of the compilers of our Articles, it must be acknowledged, that for the sevenscore years last past [*i. e.* from 1562 to 1702] since the publication of them, they have prevented diversity of opinion in the church, to that degree, that LITTLE OR NO dispute hath hitherto been, about the different senses the words may, in common and unforced construction, be made to bear <sup>b</sup>."

Here we have a short, but at the same time a full and effectual defence of those who compiled the Articles, and of the church for enjoining subscription to them, as well as a proof of the fruit-

<sup>a</sup> Generally ascribed to Dr. Binckes.

<sup>b</sup> *Prefatory Discourse*, p. 12.

less and superfluous pains taken by Bishop Burnet to reconcile men of different principles and opinions, by a peaceable and conscientious acquiescence in literal and grammatical senses. It is, indeed, the only way in which such systems, considered as *tests* of faith and doctrine, can be defended. For, if *diversities of opinions* and *disputes* have not in fact been prevented by them, it is much to be suspected, that those forms may have been accessory to some disputes and divisions, which did not exist before such forms were established.

When a candid and charitable reader, who has made any inquiry into the true state of the case, meets with assertions, which, like this, bid defiance to all history, coming from the pen of a grave writer, who does not appear to have been

“ It is the misery of Christendom that we should build too much upon articles of doctrine, upon opinions, tenets, and systems; and they must be subscribed to, sworn to, and believed; which causeth almost all the division of the Christian world. We are so earnest in asserting the orthodoxy of our own espoused doctrines, that we most lamentably fall out, break peace, lose charity, and wretchedly neglect the weightier matters, judgment, mercy, and faith, and the practice of sincere truth and righteousness.” *Strype's Sermon at Hackney, September 21, 1767, p. 12.* Besides what this venerable man had seen with his own eyes, his particular studies had opened to him a melancholy view of the woful effects of these systematical tests, from the very time of their commencement in Protestant churches, which he, as a true friend to his own church, has communicated for her use, but hitherto to very little purpose.

out



out of his senses, he would be willing to understand him with any favourable allowance, rather than suspect him of advancing a palpable untruth, for the sake of serving a present turn.

And, therefore, when my astonishment (occasioned by the sudden recollection of many things I had read in the authors referred to in the margin <sup>d</sup>) had a little subsided, I began to cast about how this writer's assertion might be made consistent with the real truth of the case?

The first expedient for this purpose, which occurred to me, was, that this avoidance of diversity must be understood of a simple silence and acquiescence on either side, in some common and unforced construction, which, as he has expressed it, the words of the *article* might be *made to bear*. But, besides that I could see no difference between this plan of peace and Bishop Burnet's *literal* and *grammatical* senses, I found it afterwards to be this author's aim to prove, that none of the articles had, or was ever understood to have, a *double meaning*. Nor, indeed, admitting such double meaning, could the articles be said to have prevented diversity of opinions, in *any* degree.

<sup>d</sup> *Rogers's* Preface to his Exposition. — *Fuller's* Church-History. — *Heylin's* Quinquarticular History. — *Hickman's* Answer. — *Prynne's* Anti-arminianism. — *Dr. Ward's* Letters to Archbishop *Usher*, apud *Parr's* Life. — Bishop *Barlow's* Remains. — *Edwards's* Veritas Redux. — Bishop *Davenant's* Pieces. — *Montague's* and *Carlton's* Controversy, and an hundred more.

After

After many fruitless trials, methought I discerned the healing quibble lurking under the words *in the church*: the author, I suppose, being of opinion, that whoever disputed the single orthodox sense of an article, was really not *in*, but *out of the church*, in consequence of the *ipso-facto*-excommunication mentioned in the 5<sup>th</sup> of our canons; which would leave none *in the church*, but such as were all of a mind.

And indeed I very much incline still to adhere to this solution of the difficulty, the rather as there is no other way of securing the veracity of another orthodox brother, and respectable contemporary of our own, the late reverend Mr. *John White*, B. D. who hath laboured with great zeal and earnestness in the same occupation of defending subscriptions; and to this *sevenscore* years of peace and rest, hath, without the least hesitation, added *forty-seven* more.

The case with Mr. *White* was this: Dr. *Samuel Chandler*, at the end of his pamphlet intitled, *The Case of Subscription, &c. calmly and impartially reviewed*, published 1748, had printed the Speech of the famous Mr. *Turretine*, spoken to the Lesser Council of *Geneva*, June 29, 1706, touching subscription to the *Formula Consensus*: the effect of which oration was, that all subscriptions to human formularies were thenceforward abolished by public authority; a promise only being required instead thereof, that the person to be admitted to the function either of minister  
or

or professor, would teach nothing, either in the church or academy, contrary to the said *Consensus*, or the Confession of the Gallican church, for the sake of peace<sup>c</sup>. This precedent Dr. Chandler

<sup>c</sup> In a pamphlet published 1719, intituled *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Tong, &c. occasioned by the late differences among the Dissenters*, an account is given of this abolition of subscriptions, different from this of Dr. Chandler, but not less honourable to the magistrates of Geneva, to the following effect. "In the year 1706, a Divine of Neuchâtel, Mr. Jacques Vial de Beaumont, a very worthy Minister of the Gospel, being called to Geneva to exercise his ministry there, was required to subscribe that numerous set of articles [the *Consensus*]. Mr. Beaumont, instead of subscribing as required, wrote to the following purpose: *These I assent to, as far as they agree with the holy scriptures, which I believe to be the word of God. I will always teach what God shall teach me from thence; and will never, knowingly, maintain or teach any thing contrary thereunto.*" After some debates and appeals from one assembly to another, a form was agreed upon, much to the same purpose as that of Mr. Beaumont. To which was added indeed an *exhortation* not to teach any thing contrary to the decisions of the Synod of Dort, the forty Articles of the French churches, or the Catechism of Geneva, for the sake of keeping peace and union in the church," pag. 77. The material difference between this account of the abolition of subscriptions at Geneva, and that of Dr. Chandler, is, that what the latter says was a *promise* required of the candidate, the other makes to be only an *exhortation* from the ministry. A difference indeed far from inconsiderable: and, as I remember, Dr. Chandler was reminded, in a printed letter addressed to him about that time, "That, while this *promise* was insisted upon, he [Chandler] had no great room to boast as he does of the moderation of the church of Geneva, such a promise, *in foro conscientiae*, amounting to little less than a formal subscription." This objection does not affect a simple *exhorta-*  
failed



failed not to recommend, as a very proper one for the church of *England* to follow; which provoked the abovementioned Mr. *White* to make the following reply:

"Because they [the Divines of *Geneva*] or  
 "most of them, had swerved from the doctrines  
 "which they were called to assent and subscribe  
 "to, and were therefore uneasy till their sub-  
 "scriptions were removed, are we to be called  
 "upon to remove ours? we, who have no such  
 "trouble and division amongst us, upon the points  
 "to be assented and subscribed to?"

This is an home push indeed, and wants only the single circumstance of TRUTH, to intitle it to the honour of deciding all future controversy

tion, against which a teacher, who should think differently from his exhorters, would always have an unanswerable remonstrance from *As* iv. 19. With respect to the matter of fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to decide whether Dr. *Chandler* or Mr. *Tong*'s correspondent were better informed. The latter, indeed, acknowledges, he had not received an *exact* account how the matter was transacted at *Geneva*. Dr. *Chandler*, as coming so long after him, should know more of the matter; and that throws the probability on the side of the *promise*. But then can any one imagine, that Mr. *Beaumont*, who undertakes to teach *what God should teach him from the scriptures*, would bind himself by a *promise*, which might very possibly oblige him to suppress what God should teach him? Perhaps there may be a mystery in this, which our Dissenters choose not to reveal. All religious societies have their *anagorismata*.

A Letter to the reverend Dr. *Samuel Chandler*, occasioned by his late Discourse intituled, *The Case of Subscription, &c.* pag. 71.

concerning

concerning subscriptions, in the church of *England*.

But in good earnest; could Mr. *White* be ignorant of the *trouble* which Dr. *Clarke* and Mr. *Whiston* met with, for their deviations from the sense of the eighth, and some others of our articles? Had he never heard of the controversy concerning *Arian* subscription? Could *he*, could any man, who has read a twentieth part of our controversies since the commencement of the current century, be ignorant, that this reproach of going against their subscriptions, has been cast in the teeth of our most eminent writers, and that too in the most opprobrious terms? \*

\* "The unchristian art of confessing the faith without believing it. An art which, I am sorry to say, has of late been brought to its utmost perfection." Archdeacon *Brydges's* Charge, 1721. p. 9. See likewise a book intituled *Ophiomachos*, vol. ii. from p. 292. to 300. where great freedoms of this kind are taken with some of the greatest names then in our country. The late controversies occasioned by Dr. *Middleton's* Free Inquiry; *Free and candid Disquisitions*; *Essay on Spirit*, &c. furnish more instances still. Nor hath Mr. *White* himself withheld his mite from this collection. "It is commonly supposed," says he, "that the Creeds and Articles of the church of *England* are subscribed only by the clergy of the church of *England*. But be it known to all the people of *Great Britain*, that there is not in the kingdom one dissenting minister, who has complied with the terms of the *Toleration*, but has solemnly subscribed the Articles, bating three or four,—and has also subscribed the three Creeds (yes, the *Athanasian*, as well as the other) that they ought thoroughly to be received and believed, &c." Good-natured soul! But, happily for the Dissenters, the civil powers (and not the church) being appoint-

L

And

148 THE CONFESSIONAL

And is there, all this while, no *trouble* or *division* among us, upon the points to be assented and subscribed to?

Why, no. The words *we* and *us*, in the above-cited passage, relate to no body but the *orthodox*, who have all along been unanimous in their opinions. While they who have occasioned these troubles and divisions, and raised these doubts concerning points of doctrine in the Articles, are not allowed to belong to this *select* number, although they continue to minister in the church of *England*, and some of them, perhaps, to minister in the highest stations of it.

That this is Mr. *White's* meaning (whatever that of the Convocation-man might be) is pretty clear from the tenor of his expostulation with his dissenting adversary. "Did the church," says he, "persecute *its own members*, at any time? Were you or your fathers ever persecuted, while they *continued in the church*? And were they *driven out of it* by those persecutions?" The pertinence of which questions plainly consists in this, that, according to Mr. *White's* notions, all these old *persecuted* Puritans ceased to be members of the church, the moment they offended against canonical conformity, in virtue of the *ipso facto* excommunication, whatever external marks of

ed to take such subscription, are not so immediately *interested* in the glory of Orthodoxy. *White's* Appendix to his third Letter, p. 80.

church-



church-membership they might otherwise bear about them.

But the misfortune of this system of Mr. *White's* is, that it would contract the conditions of church-membership into a less compass than is convenient for the orthodox themselves, who have by no means been uniform in their opinions concerning the sense of particular Articles.

"There is not any sort of agreement," says a sensible writer, "in the notions of those two eminent defenders of the Trinity, Dr. *Waterland* and Dr. *Bennet*; and yet both of them plead very strenuously for subscription to the Articles in the sense of the church; and both contend, that their respective notions are exactly what the church, and what the holy scriptures teach. Both of them have the reputation of being orthodox. Both of them are afraid of collusion, dissingenuity, fraud, and evasive arts in those who differ from each of them. — And yet, if the meaning of the Articles be in such a sense one meaning, that they can be subscribed honestly only by such as agree in that one meaning, all, or all but one, of those great men, Bishop *Bull*, Doctors *Wallis*, *South*, *Sherlock*, *Bennet*, &c. must have been guilty of these enormous crimes."

<sup>1</sup> Case of Subscription to the thirty-nine Articles considered, occasioned by Dr. *Waterland's* Case of *Arian* Subscription, P. 4.

It behoved these Doctors then to contrive plans of subscription to the Articles upon a larger bottom, such at least as might serve their own turn. But, as they were all irreproachably orthodox, it was an indispensable part of their scheme to cramp and confine the heretics, in the same degree that they made room for themselves. A circumstance which reduced them to such quibbles and distinctions, as have rendered their meaning extremely obscure and disputable.

Let us take two or three of the most staunch and orthodox among them in their order, beginning with that celebrated champion of our church, the learned Dr. *William Nicholls*.

"These Articles," says the Doctor, "could not be designed to oblige all persons who are to subscribe them, that they should agree in every point of theology which is controverted among divines<sup>1</sup>."

Probably not; because many points of theology have been controverted among divines, which are not mentioned in the thirty-nine Articles. But, with respect to *every* point of theology proposed in these Articles, I apprehend such agreement was designed.

"No," says the Doctor, "because the thing is impossible." But what then? The impossibility of the thing is no proof that the compilers of our Articles did not *design* it. How did the Doctor know, but these fathers of our church

<sup>1</sup> Commentary on the Articles, &c. p. 3. col. 1.

might think the thing very possible? Or how shall *we* know what they did or did not *design*, but by their words and declarations? The compilers themselves tell us, that the design of the Articles was to avoid diversities of opinions. Dr. *Nicholls* comes 150 years after them, and affirms this could not be the design of them. Which of them is the credible evidence?

The Doctor is of opinion, "that some of these Articles were purposely drawn up in general terms, [*i. e.* in terms admitting several senses] because they who compiled and first subscribed them, were of different opinions."

"Some of these Articles."—We desire to know *which* of them? and how the Articles which were purposely so drawn up, may be distinguished from those which were not? For the different sentiments of those who compiled and first subscribed these Articles, if it prove any thing relative to the design of the Articles, will prove, that no less than the whole set were purposely drawn up in general terms, at least if the Doctor has given us a true account of the men, to whose sentiments they were to be accommodated. "Some of them," says he, "learned their divinity from the Fathers, without any relation had to the doctrines of modern Divines. Some went up on the foot of *Luther's* and *Melancthon's* doctrine. Others were perfectly wedded to *Calvin's* divinity, and, perhaps, not a little to his form of church-discipline. Some were for a



“*real, though undeterminable presence* in the Eucharist; whilst others thought Christ’s body “was only there by figure and representation.” After which he goes on to ask, “Can any one say that these several persons held no diversity of opinions?”

Rather, can any one say, that all these several persons were agreed upon any one point, delivered in any one Article of the whole thirty-nine? And if none of them would agree to the passing such Article or Articles, as excluded his or their own opinion; the probability is, that all and every of the Articles were purposely drawn up in general terms, as nothing less would make room for the heterogeneous opinions of such a number of men, educated in so many different systems.

But mark how plain a tale will destroy this specious hypothesis. The articles were compiled by *Cranmer*, and at the most with the help of one or two of his particular friends. And these, out of all doubt, were all of a mind. They were then laid before the council, and by them approved, and ratified by the King. They were, finally, introduced into the convocation, not to receive any *synodical* authority there, but to be agreed to by subscription. And let men’s private opinions be what they would, when they were given to understand, that court-favour, and church-preferment would depend upon their compliance, we may judge in part, from what happens in our own times, that the dissenters would

not be the majority: which yet might possibly be the case, as it by no means appears, that the first subscribers were all, or most of them, members of the convocation<sup>k</sup>. Dr. *Nicholls* suffered himself to be imposed upon in this matter, by the fabulous account of *Peter Heylin*, a man lost to all sense of truth and modesty, whenever the interests or claims of the church came in question.

Well, but if the compilers made the matter so easy to men of all sorts of opinions, subscription would not give the church sufficient hold of those who are put to this test. This the Doctor foresaw, and therefore puts in his cautions in time.

“Men must not indulge *fanciful glosses*, or “wire-draw the words in the articles to *unreasonable senses*.”

But if the case really is what the Doctor hath represented it to be, I do not see how this is to be helped. Would not every *Calvinist* among the first subscribers, think the sense of the *Arminian*, or (as they then were called) the *Freewillier*, an *unreasonable sense*? And if the article expressed the sense of the *Calvinist* naturally and plainly, would he not call the different sense put upon it by the other party, a *fanciful gloss*? The compilers, it is plain, have left us no criterion in this matter. And if the articles were left so open and

<sup>k</sup> See the proofs of this collected together, in *An historical and critical Essay on the Thirty-nine Articles*, &c. printed for *Francklyn*, 1724. Introduction, p. 2, 3.

indeterminate, as the Doctor's scheme supposes, no man can pretend to say what *senses* are *unreasonable*; unless the Doctor would have said, that *all* senses but his own, are unreasonable, and then there is an end of *all* latitude.

"He thinks the force of King *James's* Declaration, did not, nor was designed to extend farther than his own time — and that, perhaps, Bishop *Burnet* might extend the rule of subscribing (in *any* literal grammatical sense) he "drew from it, too far."

Bishop *Burnet* might be to blame, for drawing a rule of acting, for a rescript of no authority; but undoubtedly, if the articles were purposely drawn up in general terms, that is, so as to admit of a conscientious subscription by the men of all those different opinions, the Doctor has mentioned, the rule itself cannot possibly be extended too far. Observe, however, that Bishop *Burnet* knew of no authority, or foundation for this rule, but the King's Declaration. This *our* Doctor, indeed, hath reprobated; but, however, we have no reason to complain of his abridging our liberty, as will appear by the following instance.

Bishop *Burnet* had observed, that, according to the form of subscription prescribed in the 36th canon, namely, "I subscribe willingly, and *ex animo*, the party subscribing declared his own opinion, or, in Dr. *Bennet's* language, declared "that



"that he believed the articles to be true in *some* "sense."

"But," says Dr. *Nicholls*, "tho' I am not altogether different from his Lordship's judgment in this matter, I am not so well satisfied with the reason he grounds it upon. For *ex animo* in that place, does not signify, according to my opinion, or, as I firmly believe, but readily and heartily. For this form of subscription is not a form of subscription to the thirty-nine articles, but to the *three* articles contained in that canon, which are not so much articles of opinion, as of consent, and the subscription to them declares, not what the subscriber *believes*, but what he *consents to*."

Nicely distinguished indeed! so, according to this casuistry, a man may, by his subscription, consent to what he *does not believe*. For this being the only form of subscribing the articles now in use, and the verbal declaration, professing no more than *assent* and *consent* to the articles, we are no more bound, by our subscription, to believe the thirty-nine articles to be true, than if they were so many propositions taken out of the *Koran*.

And yet, immediately afterwards, Dr. *Nicholls* says, "The subscriber *ought* to assent to *each* article, taken in the literal and grammatical sense." — But why *ought* he? or what business has he with the *sense* of the articles, who may  
give

give such an assent and consent to them as does not imply belief?

But it is quite necessary to take these gentlemen, every one in his own way. Bishop Burnet had said, that men might conscientiously subscribe to an literal or *grammatical* sense, the words of any article would fairly bear; but he had not said, what was meant by *literal* and *grammatical* senses?

This fell to the share of Dr. Nicholls, by whom we are informed from *Grotius*, "that the grammatical sense is twofold, *sensus grammaticalis ab origine*, and *sensus grammaticalis popularis*, the latter of which only, is to be allowed in the interpretation of any law, or writing; for," continues the Doctor, to take words in their *first* original signification, which, by length of time they have much varied from, may carry them off to a sense very different from what they were first intended; *therefore* the expressions must be taken in the plain common sense they *are* generally used in, or were used in, at the time of making such law or writing."

The former part of this observation we readily allow. If the framers of a law, or a writing, make use of words in a sense, different from the original grammatical sense of such words, it must be presumed, that it is because such words have deviated, in popular use, to a sense different from the original sense. In which case, the sense of the framers, or composers of such law or writing, is to be adopted. But it will not *therefore*

fore follow, that such words or expressions are to be taken in the sense they ARE NOW generally used in. Because the popular grammatical sense, in which the words ARE GENERALLY USED NOW, may not be the same popular grammatical sense, in which those words were used, when the law or writing was made. In all such cases, we must recur to the sense of the author or the lawgiver; or else the law or the writing cannot be understood; and the *modern* sense of words may, in some cases, carry us as far beside the intention of the author or the lawgiver, as the *original* sense would do.

For example; whatever the *original grammatical* sense of the word *consent* might have been, it is certain that the compilers of our articles meant by it, a *consent of belief*, or a *perfect agreement of opinions*: and when subscribers were afterwards required to give their *consent* to the articles, there can be no doubt but such a consent was intended, as is specified in the title, namely, such a *consent* as was necessary for *the avoiding diversities of opinions*.

Dr. Nicholls, on the other hand, finds, that *consent* may now signify a *consent of acquiescence* only, with which *opinions* and *belief* have little to do; and for this sense he accordingly contends. But with the worst luck in the world; for the thing, with respect to which this *consent* is to be *established*, happens to be TRUE RELIGION; and we may be pretty confident that the compilers  
never



never intended that a *consent* in *true religion*, which did not imply belief and conviction, should be accepted as sufficient to answer the end of subscribing the articles.

By the Doctor's distinguishing grammatical senses into *original* and *popular*, and forming his rule of interpretation upon that distinction, one would think, that the *grammatical* sense of words, in any law or writing, could be but *one*. And yet he agrees with the Bishop of Sarum, "that *several* grammatical senses may sometimes very "fairly be put upon expressions in the articles." But if you may put both the *original* and *popular* sense upon the *same* words, of what use is the distinction? or what sense is there in his rule of interpretation?

If, indeed, as the Doctor supposes, the compilers purposely drew up some of the articles in general terms, they undoubtedly left room to put *several grammatical* senses upon the *same* words; but then, how shall we know, which of these is the *popular* grammatical sense, in which only the law (or, in this case, the article) is to be interpreted?

To solve this difficulty, the learned Doctor informs us, that "a Law is to be interpreted according to the mind of the legislator; so that, "if the compilers of the Articles have expressed "themselves obscurely in any place, *that* is to "be explained, by what we find to have been "their avowed opinion, or by some other place  
" of

“of their writings, or authentic books, where  
“they have expressed themselves *clearly*.”

But here it is evidently supposed, that the obscurity in the article does not arise from the general terms in which it is *purposely* worded, but from some accidental inaccuracy of the compilers, whose avowed opinions, in their authentic books, are likewise supposed to be uniform, and consistent with each other. Otherwise, nothing can be more perplexing to the party who wants to have the difficulty cleared up, than the expedient here recommended.

For example: According to the Doctor, some of the Articles are drawn up in general terms, on purpose to receive the different senses which the compilers, who were of different opinions, might think fit respectively to put upon them. Hence arises an obscurity of expression, which the subscriber to such Articles wants to have cleared up. He consults the authentic books of a *Lutheran* compiler, and there he finds the obscurity cleared up, according to the system *that* compiler had espoused. But the *Calvinist* compiler hath likewise written authentic books, of equal authority with those of the *Lutheran*, and he unfolds the mystery in a sense just contrary to that given by the *Lutheran*. What shall the scrupulous and distracted subscriber do in such a case? or what expedient of elucidation shall he fall upon next?

But, indeed, what the good Doctor means, is only this, that, if you will allow him to point  
out

out the avowed opinions of the compilers, and to direct you to the authentic books you are to consult, he will lead you out of all obscurity, to a clear, consistent sense of an article, even though it should be drawn up in terms sufficiently *general*, to admit of an hundred different *grammatical* senses.

This is plain from the instance he brings to illustrate his general doctrine above recited, which is too curious to be passed by. It is taken from the twenty-third Article, which says, *That we ought to judge those lawfully called and sent, which be called and chosen to this work [of the ministry] by men who have public authority given them in the congregation, to call and send ministers.*

The plain, and, if you will, the *grammatical* meaning of which words is, that there is a public authority in every Christian church, to appoint the particular persons who are to minister in *that* church, exclusive of all others; and that they, and they only, who are so appointed, are lawfully called and sent.

“And yet,” says Dr. *Nicholls*, “there can be no doubt made, but that by *public authority* the compilers meant the authority of Bishops.”

But, if no doubt can be made of this, what shall we say of those compilers who *perhaps*, and of those *first* subscribers who *certainly*, were wedded to *Calvin's* form of church-discipline? “Can any one say that they held no opinion *diverse* from this interpretation? or can any one think  
“that



“that they would agree to the passing *this* Article, but that they thought it was conceived in such general terms, that they might subscribe it with a good conscience, and without equivocation?”

These are Dr. *Nicholls's* own questions, and any one has just as much right to ask them as he had.

Let us ask another question. Have any of the *Compilers* interpreted this Article as Dr. *Nicholls* has done? No: *Cranmer*, and his fellow-compilers of the Articles, (be they more or fewer) are well known to have held a friendly correspondence with the great founders and supporters of other Protestant churches abroad; who had the misfortune (if it is one) to think there might be a *lawful* call to the ministry, without a Prelacy. It is even notorious, that the opinion of these foreign Divines was asked by our English Reformers, concerning the methods they should take in settling both matters of doctrine and discipline in their own church. And can it be supposed that *Cranmer* meant to say, that the ministers in these foreign churches had no *lawful calling*?

Dr. *Nicholls* himself well knew, they neither said it, nor meant it. And therefore, instead of referring us to their *avowed opinions*, or their *authentic books*, as his position required he should do, he appeals to a matter of fact, namely, “that neither by the laws of the church, or by the laws of the realm, any public authority is  
“granted

"granted to any other than Bishops, to call or  
 "send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." As  
 if the compilers considered only what was *lawful*  
 in this respect by the *civil* constitution and *human*  
 laws of *England*; or as if the Lord had no vine-  
 yard but in *Britain*.

But indeed, if we go back to the times of the  
 compilers, the fact itself is not true. For, even  
 so late as the 13<sup>th</sup> of *Eliz.* "every person under  
 "the degree of a bishop, which did or should pre-  
 "tend to be a priest or minister of God's holy  
 "word and sacraments, by reason of *any other*  
 "form of institution, consecration, or ordering, than  
 "the form set forth by Parliament, in the time  
 "of the late King of most worthy memory, King  
 "Edward VI. or [by any other form, than the  
 "form] now used in the reign of our most gra-  
 "cious sovereign Lady,—" if he took care, be-  
 fore the Christmas next ensuing the passing this  
 Act, to qualify himself by subscription, &c. as is  
 therein directed, was deemed, by the ecclesiastical  
 as well as the civil laws of the realm, to be suffi-  
 ciently *called* and *sent*, to enjoy a benefice, and  
 exercise the function of a minister of God's word  
 and sacraments, in the church of *England* itself.  
 And there is no doubt but that hundreds, both  
 in King *Edward's* and in Queen *Elizabeth's* reign,  
 ministered in the church of *England* as *legal* Pa-  
 stors, who had no episcopal ordination; which  
 would never have been suffered, if the doctrine  
 either of the church or state was what Dr. *Nicholls's*  
 inter-

interpretation of this Article supposes it to have been.

If indeed you take the fact as Dr. *Nicholls* has stated it, and consider the grounds and principles upon which it stands, it might perhaps turn out, that the Article cannot be conscientiously subscribed by any one, but a downright *Erastian*; which however I would leave to the determination of the judicious reader, after he has duly and seriously weighed the following honest remark of Bishop *Burnet* upon this twenty-third Article.

"They who drew this Article," says his Lordship, "had the state of the several churches before their eyes that had been *differently* reformed; and although they had been less forced to go out of the *beaten path* than any other, yet they knew that all things *among themselves* had not gone according to those rules, that ought to be sacred in regular times." And so, wanting grains of allowance themselves, it was their business and their wisdom to give them to others.

Turn we now to another church-champion of casuistical memory, the famous Dr. *Bennet*, whose doublings and refinements upon the Articles are so various and intricate, that it would be an endless task to follow him through them all. A few of them may serve for a sample of the spirit which possesseth those, who undertake to defend human establishments at all adventures.

It appears in Dr. BENNET's *Directions for studying the thirty-nine Articles*, &c. published in



## 164 THE CONFESSIONAL

1714, that the said Doctor was perfectly acquainted with the sense of the church upon them all: which he accordingly opens to his young student, sometimes contrary to the most obvious and natural import of the words. In one place, where he gives an interpretation of this sort, he adds, "This was INFALLIBLY the meaning of the compilers of our Articles, and they *must* be understood in this sense <sup>1</sup>."

Upon the *third* Article he says, "The church excludes that sense of the word *Hell*, which says that by *Hell* is meant *The Grave*;" contrary to Bishop *Burnet*, Dr. *Nicholls*, Dr. *Clarke*, and many more.

Upon the *ninth* he says, "The church does not mean, that *original sin* deserves God's wrath and damnation in infants which die before the rational faculties exert themselves;" and he says, "That they who believe and subscribe the Article in *this* sense, believe and subscribe *more* than the church teaches or requires."

*Nota bene*; The Article says in express words, "*Original* (the title adds, *or birth*) *sin* deserveth God's wrath and damnation, *in every person born into the world*."

Upon the *eleventh* Article he observes, "That our church's intention and doctrine about *Justification by Faith*, are abundantly manifest, though they are *unhappily worded*." Which he explains by telling us, "that the church expres-

<sup>1</sup> Page 62. upon the sixth Article.

" sed

"sed the real truth in St. Paul's own phrase,  
"but in a sense somewhat different from what  
"he [the Apostle] did most certainly intend  
"thereby."

Qu. How far may a man safely subscribe *this*  
Article, as being agreeable to the word of God?

Upon the *thirteenth* Article he says, "That,  
"though the church makes use of the softening  
"comparative words *yea* rather, and *we doubt*  
"not but, yet, the Latin word for *rather* being  
"*immo*, the church directly affirms, that works  
"done before the grace of *Christ* have the nature  
"of sin."

The Doctor inquires, in another work, to what  
*edition* of the Articles we are obliged to subscribe,  
by the act of the 13 Eliz. chap. 12<sup>a</sup>? The  
Doctor determines for the *new English translation*,  
to which Queen Elizabeth's ratification is an-  
nexed, and which, out of all dispute, has the  
*softening comparative* words. We are not obliged  
therefore, by the statute above-mentioned, to  
take any notice of the word *immo*, although it  
carries along with it the church's *direct affirma-*  
*tion*.—But, to accumulate no more instances,

Upon the *seventeenth* Article, he says, "He  
"is so clear that the church condemns the notion

<sup>a</sup> Perhaps the Apostle purposely delivered this doctrine in such  
expressions as would admit of different interpretations, to accom-  
modate THE CHURCH with a variety to choose out of, though  
he did not leave such choice to each particular person. See Dr.  
Rutherford's Vindication, &c. p. 12.

<sup>a</sup> Essay on thirty-nine Articles, chap. xxx.

"of *absolute predestination* in her Liturgy, that, "if *that* was his notion, he could not subscribe "to the *use* of the Liturgy. And with this the "Article *must be* consistent." He should have said, "must be *made* consistent;" for which edifying purpose, the Doctor hath taken a great deal of fruitless pains, to shew that the Article is in perfect agreement with *Arminius* upon the same subject.

From these particulars it appears, that, in the year 1714, Dr. *Bennet* was intimately acquainted with the sense of the church, upon the obscurest and most ambiguous of the thirty-nine Articles, and accordingly communicated his discoveries with great freedom, and sometimes so, that the literal import of the words of the Article was by no means favourable to his construction. And where was the use or the pertinence of all his labour, if his young student was not given to understand by it, that he must subscribe the Articles in these very senses, exclusive of all others?

And yet, the very next year, *viz.* 1715, the very same Dr. *Bennet*, in the 35<sup>th</sup> chapter of his *Essay on the thirty-nine Articles*, in answer to *Priestcraft in Perfection*, undertaking to enquire (by what temptation infatuated does not appear) *what liberty the church allows to the subscribers of the Articles?* answers, that "The church does not "restrain us to the belief of any one Article or "Proposition, in any particular sense, farther than  
" we



"we are confined by the words themselves." —

As much as to say, that, where the words do not confine us, the church has *no* particular sense of her own. Contrary to his repeated interpretations in his *Directions*, where he over and over exhibits the church's sense, against the confinement of the words themselves; and contrary to his Majesty's Declaration: for, should the Doctor have been asked, in what sense men are allowed to subscribe? must he not, to preserve his self-consistency, have answered, "in any sense of *our* own, which we believe to be true, and which the construction of the words will admit of?"

"When an Article or Proposition," says the Doctor, "is fairly capable of two different senses, I would fain know who has power to determine which is the church's sense?"

When the Doctor wrote his *Directions*, &c. he thought he himself had this power; upon the supposition, I imagine, that the church had left no article or proposition capable of *two different senses*. If indeed such articles or propositions are left *ambiguous*, and, particularly, if (according to Dr. *Nicholls*) they are so left of set purpose, I do not know who has any power to determine that the church, in such articles or propositions, had *any* sense at all.

Be it observed by the way, that Dr. *Bennet* perfectly ridicules Dr. *Nicholls's* expedient of consulting the writings of the compilers of the Articles, for the purpose of clearing up obscurities

## 168. THE CONFESSIONAL

in them. "For," says he, "did they write [their "books] by authority? or were all that lived in "their time of the same opinion? Might not "the Convocation themselves differ as much as "the words [of the Articles] are capable of ad-  
"mitting?"

In the 33d chapter of the same *Essay*, the Doctor undertaking to prove, (and meaning to prove no more than) that they who subscribe the Articles, are obliged to believe them true in *some* sense; he hath brought arguments, which prove (if they prove any thing) that such subscribers are obliged to believe them not only true, but true in *one* and the *same* sense, exclusive of all others; or which prove, that no proposition in the Articles has more than *one* sense. And thus Dr. Bennet is not only against Dr. Nicholls, as to the point of a consent of acquiescence, but against himself in the tenor of his whole 35<sup>th</sup> chapter.

1. He argues from the title of the Articles, "which," he observes, "shews them to be designed to prevent *diversities of opinions*." But if two or two hundred men subscribe the same proposition in different senses, the *design* of the Articles is, with respect to these subscribers, absolutely defeated.

2. He argues from the words of a canon made in the Convocation of 1571, viz. *Ita tamen, ut prius subscribant Articulis Christianæ Religionis, publice in Synodo approbatis, fidemque dent, se velle tueri & defendere DOCTRINAM EAM quæ in illis*  
M  
conti-

## THE CONFESSIONAL 169

*continetur, ut* CONSENTIENTISSIMAM VERITATI  
VERBI DIVINI.

Now, if the composers of this canon, by *doctrinam eam*, meant more than *one* doctrine upon *one* subject, they expressed themselves very ill, both as to grammar and sense. If the wording of any proposition admit of two or more doctrines or senses different from each other, as Dr. Bennet allows to be fairly possible; and more especially if (as Bishop Burnet contends) those doctrines may be literally and grammatically *contrary* to each other; how could they both or all be *defended* as *most agreeable to the divine word*? The church declares, she herself may not, and therefore certainly would not suffer her sons, to interpret scripture in a manner repugnant to itself. [Art. xx.] And what are subscriptions in different senses, upon the principles of this canon, more or less than this?

3. The Doctor argues from a judgment at Common Law, reported by Lord Chief Justice Coke, the substance of which is, “that if any subscription is allowed which admits diversity of opinions, (to avoid which was the scope of the statute 13 Eliz.) this Act touching subscriptions would be rendered of no effect.”

° The case upon which this judgment was given, was, that “one Smith subscribed to the said thirty-nine Articles with this addition, *so far forth as the same were agreeable to the word of God*. Whereupon it was resolved by Wray, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench, and all the Judges of England, that this



—The consequence is plain. Two subscribers to the same proposition in two different senses, are

“ subscription was not according to the statute of 13 *Elix.* because the statute required an *absolute* subscription, and this subscription made it *conditional*, and that this Act was made for avoiding diversity of opinions, &c. and by this addition, the party might, *by his own private opinion*, take some of them to be against the word of God, and by this means diversity of opinions should not be avoided, *which was the scope of the statute*, and the very Act itself made, touching subscription, of none effect.” *Bennet's Essay*, chap. xxxiii. p. 417. who cites *Coke's Instit.* 4. cap. 74. p. 324. If one should hereupon ask, Does the church then, or the law, require subscription *exclusive* of this condition, namely, whether these Articles are agreeable to the word of God, or not? I suppose, the answer would be, “ No ; there is a tacit condition, or proviso, implied, by the principles of every protestant church, that the conformity required be agreeable to the word of God.” But then what is the meaning of the word *absolute*, in this judgment of Lord Chief Justice *Wray*? What is the reason that, for the avoiding diversity of opinions, the *private opinion* of the party subscribing is *disallowed*? It is plain, that the *tacit* condition admits of *private opinion*, as much as if it were *expressed*. But so doth not the *judgment*. On another hand, to say, by way of salving this matter, that it is taken for granted, that all the church's ordinances are agreeable to the word of God, is to say, that it is taken for granted that the church is *infallible*; for if I conform without examination, or interposing my own private opinion whether my conformity is or is not agreeable to the word of God, I have no other way of justifying myself against those scriptures which require *examination*, than by the presumption that the church cannot err. Is it not high time for our respectable superiors in church and state to reconsider these matters, and to deliver honest and thinking men, who are earnestly desirous of serving the public to the best of their abilities, from these mortifying perplexities?

of

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 171

of *divers* opinions. Admit this subscription to pass, and you render the Act of *none effect*.

In one word, whatever argument in this chapter does not prove that the Articles, and every proposition in them, are to be believed by every subscriber to be true in *one* and the *same* uniform, invariable sense, does not prove that the subscriber is obliged to believe them to be true in *any* sense.

The sum then of *Dr. Bennet's* atchievements upon the thirty-nine Articles, is this.

He hath proved, that the church of *England* has a particular sense of her own upon every one of these Articles; which sense, according to the Doctor, is sometimes contrary to the natural import of the words.

He hath proved, that the church requires subscribers to these Articles to believe them all, and every proposition in them, to be true in *one* particular sense.

And yet the same *Dr. Bennet* hath proved, that the same church of *England* hath no particular

Where would be the harm, or the inconvenience, or the impropriety, of allowing Protestant ministers to subscribe to human forms *with this condition*? And how much good sophistry, which might be saved for better purposes, is now squandered away in vain attempts to reconcile subscriptions *without it*, to the original principles of the Protestant Reformation? — If the *Smith* here mentioned is the same with one of that name recorded by *Mr. Strype*, *Life of Bishop Aylmer*, p. 152, he appears, even through the shades interposed by the honest orthodox Historian, to have been a worthy and a valuable man.

sense

sense of her own in those Articles, where the words are capable of two different senses, or no particular sense which can be discovered; and consequently that the Articles may be subscribed in *any* sense the construction of the words will *fairly* admit of. Of which *fairness*, however, much may be said by the subscriber, to which the church perhaps would hardly agree.

Let us now see what we can make of Dr. *Nicholls* and Dr. *Bennet* in company.

Dr. *Bennet* asserts, "that, though we subscribe the 35<sup>th</sup> Article, we don't subscribe to the Homilies. There is in reality," says he, "no such thing required of us, as a subscription to the Homilies. We must subscribe the [35<sup>th</sup>] Article, 'tis true, but not the Homilies."

But, according to Dr. *Nicholls*, the very same is the case with respect to the thirty-nine Articles themselves. "The form of subscription," quoth he, "is not a form of subscription to the thirty-nine Articles, but to the three Articles contained in the thirty-sixth Canon." "Therefore," to borrow Dr. *Bennet's* words, "there is in reality no such thing as a subscription to the thirty-nine Articles required of us." For the two cases are exactly alike; and Dr. *Bennet's* reasons for *his* assertion may, with equal force and propriety, be applied to the support of Dr. *Nicholls's* proposition. And now, if the scrupulous subscriber is not made perfectly easy, he must be hard to please.



However, it is not adviseable for him to depend too much on these Casuists. 'Tis a slippery undertaking they have in hand; and I am afraid that Dr. Bennet's arguments on this head prove nothing but that he was in great concern to save his credit with the church, and at the same time to accommodate his young student, and perhaps himself, with certain convenient quibbles, when the occasion should call for them. However, he had great authorities on his side; no less than the eminent prelates *Laud* and *Burnet*.

The former says, that, "Though we [have] subscribed generally to the doctrine of the *Homilies* as good, yet we did not express, or mean thereby, to justify or maintain every particular phrase or sentence contained in them."

By this latitude, his Grace got some shelter for the use of *Images* in churches; and for his dissent from the *Calvinistical* explanations of *Grace*, *Justification*, &c.

Bishop *Burnet* holds, that "All we profess about them [the *Homilies*], is only, that they contain a godly and wholesome doctrine. This," says he, rather relates to the main importance and design of them, than to every passage in them."

It is not improbable, that his Lordship had some objection (as well he might) to some passages in the *Homilies* against wilful rebellion.

To these Dr. *Bennet* hath added the opinion of a *Nonjuror*, who says, "The doctrine of the  
" *Homilies*,

"Homilies is the only thing we are obliged to maintain, and not the *arguments* brought to support it."

But how, if the *doctrine* cannot be maintained without the arguments?—Thus we see one disclaims an *unwholesome phrase* or *sentence*, another dislikes a *passage*, a third an *argument*; and when every one has made his particular exception, what may become of the poor Homilies, who can tell?

Dr. Bennet observes, that Archbishop *Laud*, Bishop *Burnet*, the abovementioned Nonjuror, and himself, do exactly agree in the sense of what the article says, touching the Homilies.

Give me leave to add another to the *groupe*, even the respectable *Minorite* FRANCIS SINCLAIR, alias DAVENPORT, who, upon this thirty-fifth article, thus descants:

*Multa quidem sunt in Homiliis laude digna. Alia nec nobis [Papistis sc.] vel doctoribus eorum arri-  
dent. Nec tenentur Protestantes ob hæc verba in  
Articulo, in singula verba vel sententias Homilia-  
rum jurare.*

Whether *Laud* took the hint from *Sinclair*, or *Sinclair* from him, is a point not worth contesting: but I am greatly concerned to find Bishop *Burnet* in such company. However, it may be some excuse for him, that he sticks to the *main importance* and *design* of the Homilies; which, out of all dispute, was to exclude and reprobate *Papery*.

But

But what! no advocate for the poor Homilies?

Yes; here is one worth three dozen of *Lauds*, *Bennets*, or *Sinclairs*, the learned Bishop *Barlow*.

"The church of *England*," says this worthy bishop, "has, in her Homilies (confirmed by acts of parliament and convocation, and subscribed by all the clergy) declared the Pope to be *Antichrist*. And then I desire to know, whether they be true and obedient sons of the church of *England*, who publicly deny her *established* doctrines, which they had before publicly subscribed?"

Would the reader know who the sons of the church were, whose *truth* and *obedience* are thus called in question? Even *Gilbert Sheldon*, Archbishop of *Canterbury*; and a much honest man, the painful and pious Dr. *Henry Hammond*.

But there is a third sort of defenders of the church, who play fast and loose in this cause of the Homilies, and seem to have taken fees on both sides.

*Peter Heylin*, having his objections to the strict observance of the Lord's day, as taught in the Irish Articles of religion, argues thus: "It is contrary to the book of Homilies; and, if it be contrary to the book of Homilies, it must be also contrary to the book of Articles, by which those Homilies are approved and recommended to the use of the church &c."

<sup>p</sup> Genuine Remains, p. 192.

<sup>q</sup> Heylin's *Respondet Petrus*, p. 130.

And



## 176 THE CONFESSIONAL

And yet the same *Peter*, (the \*\*\*\*\* of those times, who was never at a loss, nor ever incumbered with the least *diffidence*) being pressed with a question from Archbishop *Usher*, whether he admitted the two volumes of Homilies into his Creed? replied, "That a man may so far take  
" the two volumes of the Homilies into his Creed;  
" as to believe *as much of them* as is required of  
" him in the book of Articles. For he may very  
" warrantably and safely say, that he does verily  
" believe that the second book of Homilies doth  
" contain a godly and wholesome doctrine, and  
" necessary for those times; that is to say," adds the Doctor, "the times in which they were *first*  
" published."

*That is to say*, The second book of Homilies, considered as a book published to serve a present turn (as Bishop *Burnet* has it), is a good sort of book, and may be subscribed without a qualm.

This puts me in mind of a passage, where we are told of what use and in what repute the Homilies have been in these latter ages, after these our grandfathers were fallen asleep.

"As for the *Homilies*," says my author, "they  
" are good or bad, of undeniable authority, or  
" of none, just as they themselves (*churchmen*  
" about the year 1724) please. Those against  
" *rebellion* are particularly good against all tu-  
" mults, and disorders, and treasons, but *their*

\* Heylin's *Respondet Petrus*, p. 130.

"own;

"own; and are to be urged home against the  
 "men whom they dislike. But those against *your*  
 "idolatry and antichristianism, and against many  
 "of *your* doctrines, I assure your *Holiness*, are of  
 "no account among the *same* men, but as the  
 "warm, over-hasty efforts of ignorant zeal, in  
 "the first Reformers; not fit to be urged against  
 "any *true churchman* (any more than those of  
 "the *Calvinistical* strain) since the time of Arch-  
 "bishop *Laud* \*."

I shall now dismiss Dr. *Bennet* with one parting  
 remark upon a striking passage in the xxxvth  
 chapter of his *Essay*.

"I can't but think," says he, "that if a man  
 "doubts of the sense of his declaration, whether  
 "it is such as he *may* mean in the making of it,  
 "he ought, in the presence of God, to ask his  
 "conscience this question, *Do I verily think, that*  
 "*if I were to acquaint my superiors with it, they*

\* The late excellent Bishop *Hoadley* is now acknowledged  
 to have been the author of this severe but just reproof of the  
 high-church clergy of his time. I wish it could be said of *his*  
 time *only*. But after a pretty long interval, wherein the fruits  
 of a better spirit have appeared with no small advantage to the  
 cause of the Protestant Reformation, there seem to be manifest  
 tokens that the old leaven is beginning to work again as briskly  
 as ever. Among other instances, we find the grave Mr. Professor  
*Rutherford* going out of his way to peck at this *humorous* Dedi-  
 cation; impotently enough indeed, but what of that? he shews  
 his goodwill, and will be sufficiently understood by *such readers*  
 as (in his own elegant phrase) he *WRITES FOR*, without a *Fescue*.  
 See Dr. *Rutherford's* Vindication, &c. p. 17. *Second* Vindica-  
 tion, p. 4.

"would

"would allow me to understand my declaration  
 "thus? I dare say the answer of his conscience  
 "would be a true resolution of the doubt."

But, I dare say, the answer of his superior's conscience (which is one of the consciences herein concerned) would be a *truer* resolution of the doubt. And why should he hesitate to acquaint his *superior* with it; since he may do it, whenever he is obliged to *subscribe* or *declare*, without going out of his way?—Perhaps the Bishop might not approve of the *meaning*; in which case, he must either go without his preferment, or *declare* in a sense he does *not* mean. Whereas the matter being transacted between the man and his conscience (which will bear to be debated with more freely than a Bishop might allow), the *conscience* may be brought over to the side of the MAN, and the doubt *commodiously* resolved to the satisfaction of both parties.

"A man," says Dr. *Waterland*, "must have a  
 "very mean opinion of the understanding or integrity of his superiors, to suppose that they  
 "ever can allow him to trifle at such a rate, in so  
 "serious a matter as subscription."—That is, to presume upon their consent, to put a sense of his own upon a disputable Article.

And this gives me an opportunity of introducing *this* learned Doctor's opinions upon this important case, who having treated the subject

\* Case of *Arian* Subscription, p. 45.



*ex professo*, in his well-known *Case of Arian Subscription*, and the *Supplement* he wrote in defence of it, will carry us into a new field of controversy, as he exhibits much curious matter, which fell not within the notice of Drs. *Nicholls* and *Bennet*.

Dr. *Waterland* professes to set out where Dr. *Stebbing* and Dr. *Rogers* end. And these Doctors end, "in confirming our excellent church in her full power of requiring subscription to *her own* sense of holy scripture."

Now these interpretations, or this sense of holy scripture, to which we are required to subscribe, are the thirty-nine Articles of Religion, adopted by the church, as they were left by the compilers in 1562. The sense, therefore, put upon the holy scriptures in these Articles by the compilers of them, is the sense of the church.

"But," says Dr. *Waterland*, "the sense of the compilers, *barely considered*, is not *always* to be observed, but so far only as the *natural* and proper signification of words, or the intention of the imposers, binds it upon us."

By the *imposers*, I apprehend, must be meant the *ministerial* imposers, that is, the Bishops, they being the persons appointed by law to take this security of subscription, on behalf of the church.

But the Doctor was told "that the Archbishops and Bishops, or even the legislature itself (without a new declaratory law), cannot determine

" *Case of Arian Subscription*, p. 7.

" *Ibid.* p. 11.

N

" what

"what shall be the sense of the doctrines in the Articles?" And he was so far truly told. For the sense of the Articles is already determined to be the sense of the compilers, and no other; the declaration and subscription to the Articles being enjoined by a law, which is nearly coeval with the compilers themselves.

In this the Doctor found himself obliged to acquiesce; and, in his reply, "would not take upon him to determine what the Bishops or the Legislature might do."—So that by this tergiversation, the *natural* and *proper* signification of words, and the intention of the imposers, are thrown quite out of the question; and we are once more brought back to the single sense of the compilers. For, if the Bishops may not alter the sense of the Articles, in virtue of any power given them by the church, or even by the legislature; neither may the subscriber, upon pretence of giving a *natural* and *proper* signification to the words.

"The sense of the compilers and imposers," says the Doctor, "where certainly known, must be religiously observed, even though the words were capable of another sense."

The sense of the imposers may be always certainly known, and consequently, according to the Doctor, must always be religiously observed.

<sup>x</sup> Case of Subscription to the thirty-nine Articles, p. 32.

<sup>y</sup> Supplement, p. 41.

<sup>z</sup> Case of *Arian* Subscription, p. 11.

Which

Which I mention (nor that the imposers have any thing to do in the affair, but) to shew how by this proposition the Doctor abridged his own liberty, when it came to his turn to plead for it. The case is this: The Doctor says, "that diversity of opinions is intended to be avoided with respect to points determined <sup>a</sup>." Among *points determined*, the Doctor reckons the doctrine of the Trinity. But, pleading for a liberty to subscribe the seventeenth and other Articles in an *Arminian* sense, he considers *these* points as *undetermined*.

Whereas, by taking in the sense of the imposers, the meaning of the Articles is determinable in *all* points; because the sense of the imposers may be *always* certainly known, whatever the sense of the compilers may be.

"The Article in the Apostles Creed concerning Christ's descent into *Hell*, is now universally understood in a sense probably different from what the compilers of the Creed intended," says the learned Dr. *Clarke*.

"However that be," replies Dr. *Waterland*, "one thing is certain, that our church hath left that article at large, intending a latitude; and indulging a liberty to subscribers to abound in their own sense <sup>b</sup>."

Here, if you leave out the intention of the *imposers*, one thing is certain, that no latitude is

<sup>a</sup> Case of Arian Subscription, p. 11.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. p. 35.



## 181 THE CONFESSIONAL

left to the subscriber of the Article; the words *hell* and *inferi* never signifying any thing in the days of the compilers, but the place of torment. If the intention of the imposers is taken into the account, another thing is certain, that no liberty is allowed to subscribers to abound in their own sense, unless, having deserted the sense of the compilers, they absolutely neglect the intention of the imposers, which may always be certainly known.

Dr. *Waterland* indeed tries to salve all this by saying, "that the sense of the compilers and imposers may generally be presumed the same" (except in some very rare and particular cases) \*."

Well then may the imposers, in any of these rare and particular cases, go against the *known*, or even the *presumed* sense of the compilers? If they may, the Doctor should have told us how they came by their authority; and why the imposers may not, upon equally good grounds, desert the compilers, in cases neither *rare* nor *particular*? Besides, one imposer may think that a rare and particular case, which to another is not so. A third imposer may have *his* rare and particular cases, different from them both; and so a fourth and a fifth, till the sense of the compilers is thrown quite out of doors in every case.

\* Case of Arian Subscription, p. 11.

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 183

Dr. Waterland, in particular, had *rare* and *particular* cases of his own, upon which he acts the part of an *imposer* with no ill grace.

Of the articles relating to the Trinity, the Doctor says, "their sense is fixed, and bound upon the conscience of every subscriber, by the plain, natural signification of the words, and by the known intent of the compilers and imposers <sup>d</sup>."

But of the damnatory clauses in the *Athanasian* Creed, he says, "that the compilers sense being doubtful, and the imposers having left those clauses without any exposition, the subscriber is at liberty to understand them in such sense as the words will bear, and such as best answers the main intent and design of that creed; and is most agreeable to scripture and reason <sup>e</sup>."

The sense of the articles, says the Doctor, concerning the Trinity, is fixed and certain. Who has fixed it? Not the *compilers*, otherwise than by expressing the propositions relating to the Trinity, in terms which accorded with their own ideas. And has the compiler of the *Athanasian* Creed done either more or less, with respect to the damnatory clauses? — On another hand, the *imposers* have left those clauses without any *exposition*. And where, I pray, is their ex-

<sup>d</sup> Case of Arian Subscription, p. 36.

<sup>e</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

position of the articles relating to the Trinity, to be met with?

"This instance," continues the Doctor, "is nothing parallel to the case of the Articles concerning the Trinity; whose sense is fixed and certain as before said."

That is to say, "The subscriber is NOT at liberty to understand these Articles in such sense, as the words will bear; or in such sense, as best answers the main intent and design of the whole set of Articles; or in such sense, as is most agreeable to scripture and reason." For in these circumstances, according to the Doctor, consists the specific difference, between the case of subscribing the damnatory clauses in the *Athanasian* creed, and the case of subscribing the Articles concerning the *Trinity*. — And thus, kind reader, "is our excellent church confirmed in her *full power* of requiring subscription to HER OWN SENSE of Holy Scripture."

The Doctor proceeds: "Fix, in like manner, the senses of the damnatory clauses; and it shall soon be proved that every subscriber ought to acquiesce in it."

Having so good encouragement, let us try what we can do.

*Whosoever will be saved, it is necessary, before all things, that he hold the catholic faith; which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt*



doubt be shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this.

Then follows the doctrine of the Trinity, expressed in the articles of the creed, whose sense, the Doctor says, is *fixed and certain*, &c. as above. After which we have some more of these clauses.

He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity. And, at the close of all, *This is the catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully, he cannot be saved.*

Now what is the *plain, natural* signification of these words? The common sense of the subscriber answers, "that you shall perish everlastingly," if you don't believe the *Athanasian* doctrine of the Trinity, *conceptis verbis*.

"No such thing," says the Doctor, "the words are not fixed and certain; this is an unreasonably rigorous sense of them." — Well, what is then to be done? Will the learned Doctor help us to a more commodious sense? No, but he will tell you how you may help yourself to one.

Let any man shew," says he, "what sense it is most reasonable to understand them in; and the same reasons (if good) shall serve to show that *that* was the sense of the compiler."

We thank you, good Doctor, and will now make use of your expedient.

It is *reasonable* then to suppose, that a warm dogmatical man, heated by controversy and op-

position, who was presumptuous enough to lay down points of artificial Theology, as articles of faith, without any support from scripture, might have the assurance to consign all men to damnation, who did not believe his doctrines; having probably no other way to procure them to be received.

“No, says Dr. *Waterland*, your reasons are not good. The Creed was written and received in an *enlightened* and *knowing* age, and consequently by a person of great accuracy and solid judgment, who had his information from scripture; and to whom no passion or prejudice ought to be imputed.”

Be it so; and let us go another way to work. The sense of this Creed, and the sense of the Articles concerning the Trinity, is one and the same; and is a fixed and certain sense. May a man then *disbelieve* this sense? or put *a sense of his own* upon the Creed or the Articles, and not perish everlastingly? — If yea, I doubt this *fixed* sense, whatever it may be as to its *catholicism*, will not turn out to be the true christian faith, on the belief of which the scriptures say, everlasting life doth absolutely depend.

Dr. *Waterland* might rail against *prevarication*, as long, and as *loudly* as he pleased; but I am very much mistaken, if he had not as much occasion for it as any of his opponents.

But doctors differ; and even some of the *orthodox* have refused this gracious liberty of subscribing

scribing the damnatory clauses, in a *commodious* sense.

Dr. Edmund Calamy, had said, in one of his *Defences of moderate Nonconformity*, "that though the 8th Article intimates, that the Athanasian Creed ought thoroughly to be received, yet it does not necessarily follow, that it takes in the *Appendages*; and I may thoroughly receive the substance of the Creed, *said he*, and yet abhor the damnatory clauses."

"That is," replied Mr. Johnson of Cranbrook, "by subscribing the whole Creed, I meant only the middle, and not both ends. And, by parity of reason, other men may subscribe to both ends, and not to the middle."

"Strange, says Mr. Johnson, that such men as these, should make conscience of subscribing the liturgy, when, upon such principles, they may subscribe the Mass-book?"

I am of opinion that this reflection concerned Dr. Waterland as much within a trifle, as Dr. Calamy.

"I know," says Dr. Waterland, "many have strained the damnatory clauses to an unreasonable rigour, on purpose to disparage the Creed." — That is, many have affirmed that the sense of these clauses is as *fixed, certain, and positive*, as the sense of the Creed itself. Mr. Johnson is one of these; but had it been requir-

<sup>1</sup> Clergyman's *Vade Mecum*, Vol. ii. 121, 122.



## 188 THE CONFESSIONAL

ed, I would have been Mr. *Johnson's* compurgator, that he had no purpose to disparage the Creed.

To prove his doctrine of *fixed* and *unfixed* senses, Dr. *Waterland* informs us, that "a distinction should be made, between such Articles as, being formed in general terms, leave a latitude for private opinions, and such as, being otherwise formed, leave no such latitude &c."

Here the Doctor was called upon for his *criteria*, by which such different formations might be distinguished from each other; "otherwise, his opponent insisted, the liberty might be extended to every proposition in each Article, which is capable of several senses<sup>b</sup>."

To which the Doctor replied, "Any certain indication of the imposers meaning, is a *criterion* to fix the sense of a proposition. When there are neither plain words, nor any other certain indication of the imposer's meaning, the Article, so far, is left at large, and the point left undetermined<sup>i</sup>."

Surely this *imposer* cannot be the Bishop who takes the subscription: for every man may have a certain indication of the Bishop's meaning before whom he subscribes, if the Bishop has the use of speech to convey it. The Doctor too has ac-

<sup>a</sup> Case of Arian Subscription, p. 39. 40.

<sup>b</sup> Case of Subscription, p. 9.

<sup>i</sup> Supplement, p. 30.

knowledge

known in this very pamphlet, that Bishops, for ought he knows, may have no power to ascertain the sense of the Articles. Who or what then is this phantom of an *imposer*? And whither must we go for his meaning?

When Dr. *Waterland* allows, that there is a latitude left for private opinion in some cases, and when he supposes, that some Articles are left at large, and some points undetermined; he should seem to mean, *so* left at large, and *so* undetermined, as to admit of *different*, and even *contradictory* opinions and senses.

For example, the opinions of the *Arminians* and *Calvinists*, concerning conditional and absolute decrees, are contradictory opinions. If then both subscribe the seventeenth Article, and each in his own sense, they must give it two inconsistent and contradictory senses.

Again; the opinions of Dr. *Waterland* and Dr. *Bennet*, the one holding the procession of the Holy Spirit (proposed in the *fifth* Article) to be *eternal*, the other, only *temporal*\*, seem to be opinions flatly contradictory to each other. Would not Logicians say, that to predicate *finite* and *infinite* of one and the same subject, is a contradiction? Moreover Dr. *Waterland* thought (and indeed so think I) that the church had determined the point for *him*. Whereas Dr. *Bennet* would not

\* Case of Arian Subscription, p. 39.

allow, that the church had determined either way.

Would any man now suspect, that the *Calvinists* and *Arminians* subscribed the *seventeenth* Article; and the Doctors *Waterland* and *Bennet* the *fifth*, in one and the same sense respectively?

Yet this is what Dr. *Waterland* undertook to prove. "Both, says he, subscribe to the same general proposition, and both in the same sense; only they differ in the *particulars* relating to it; which is not differing (AT LEAST IT NEED NOT BE) about the sense of the Article, but about particulars *not* contained in it."

He instances in the *seventeenth* Article. "Imagine the Article to be left in general terms. Both sides may subscribe to the same general proposition, and both in the same sense; which sense reaches not to the particulars in dispute. And if one believes predestination to be *absolute*, and the other *conditionate*, this is not (on the present supposition) differing about the sense of the Article, but in their respective additions to it."

To this I answer.

1. That in the present case these *general terms*, have *particular ideas* fixed to them by the respective subscribers, and consequently, if these are *different* or *opposite ideas*, the terms must be subscribed, in *different* or *opposite* senses: which, in this present case, reaches so materially to the par-



ticulars in dispute, that the *Calvinist* has no idea of any *predestination* which is *not* absolute.

2. Though this ingenious neutrality of the *seventeenth* Article might serve the turn of the *Calvinists* and *Arminians*, yet it cannot, upon Dr. *Waterland's* principles, be applied to the difference between Dr. *W.* and Dr. *Bennet*. For here, according to one side, the church hath *determined*. Determined what? Why concerning a *particular* not contained in the Article. For, according to Dr. *Bennet*, "the church never once adds the epithet *eternal* to the word *procession*." The church then determines concerning terms *not* contained in the Article, as well as concerning those that are.

3. Upon this scheme of unity, Dr. *Waterland* and the *Arians* subscribed in one and the same sense. "They all subscribed the same general terms, which contain the same general sense. They differed indeed about their respective additions to the sense of the Articles; but not about the sense of the Article itself."

No such thing, says Dr. *W.* "The propositions concerning the H. Trinity, contained in our public forms, are not general or indefinite, but special and determinate, in the very points in difference between Catholics and *Arians*, [*viz.*] consubstantiality, coequality, coeternity, &c. and that in as clear and strong words as any can be devised."

We

## 192 THE CONFESSIONAL

We shall see in the next chapter, that some of these *special* and *determinate* propositions concerning the Trinity, in our public forms, may be taken in *four* different senses. In the mean time, suffice it to observe, that the *Calvinists* are as positive for the *special* and *determinate* sense of the seventeenth Article, as this Doctor is for that of the Trinitarian forms. They tell you, that for the description of the state of a man, consigned by a divine decree to an inevitable lot, exclusive of all conditions, no stronger, clearer or more precise word can be devised, than *Predestination*: and that it is absurd, and contradictory, to talk of *divine* decrees controulable by contingent conditions, which would make them to differ nothing from *human* decrees. And is there, in very deed, any greater absurdity in qualifying the words *consubstantiality*, *coequality*, &c. with such epithets as suppose they need not be applied to different Beings, so as to imply that those Beings are in all possible respects *absolutely* such? If such qualification may be admitted *in any one respect*, the propositions abovementioned are not special and determinate, any more than the propositions concerning *Predestination*.

Thus we see, Dr. *Waterland*, by opening a door for his own *Arminian* subscription, unwarily let in the *Arians* at the same entrance, who would not be turned out, for all he could say to them. And, indeed, if there is prevarication on *one* side,

it

it cannot be helped; it is the same case on the other. There must be the same latitude allowed to both, or to neither.

It is indeed surprizing that Dr. *Waterland*, who very well knew that subscription to the Articles, is not a term of lay-communion, but of ministerial acceptance; or, in other words, a condition upon which ministerial trusts and privileges are conferred, should admit of the least latitude in subscriptions. For what are these ministerial trusts? Is not one of them a trust to preach the word of God, according to the interpretation of the church of *England*, specified in the xxxix Articles? If these interpretations are exhibited in these Articles in terms so general, as to admit of different senses, how shall any man be able to execute his trust, till he shall be informed which of these senses is the specific doctrine of the church of *England*? If the compilers of the Articles, on the other hand, intended that two men, might raise two different doctrines, from one and the same proposition in the Articles, of what use was this test? or where was the common sense of establishing it? The truth of the case then, is just as the Bishop of *Bristol*<sup>1</sup> hath stated it, in his noted sermon on subscriptions. "Every one," says his Lordship, "who subscribes the Articles of Religion, does thereby engage, not only not to dispute or contradict them; but his

<sup>1</sup> Dr. *Conybeare*.

" subscription



## 194 THE CONFESSIONAL

"his subscription amounts to an approbation of, and an assent to, the truth of the doctrines therein contained, in the very sense [in] which the compilers are supposed to have understood them." And accordingly his Lordship, very consistently (with what *solidity* is another question), defends the church of *England*, in the exercise of her *rights* to obtrude her own interpretations of scripture upon her Ministers, to the exclusion of all others.

The staunch champions of the church of *England* know perfectly well that this is a true representation, both of the original intention of the church, and the actual intention of the law. And accordingly, foreseeing that it might be objected, that this power of fixing and obtruding her own interpretations of scripture upon her sons, is rather more than a *protestant* church ought to pretend to, they have prepared an answer, which, upon the supposition of such a latitude as is contended for, would be utterly impertinent.

Here, say they, is no *inquisition*, no compulsion in the case. The church of *England* compels no man to subscribe. They may let it alone, if they please. "All the business is," says the merciful Dr. *Stebbing*, "we cannot admit you to the office of public teachers." And a bad business enough of all conscience, if, by this *non-admission*, many an honest, pious, and learned man is reduced to starve: which has been the case with

<sup>m</sup> *Rational Inquiry*, p. 39.

some,

some, and, but for this happy invention of a *latitude*, would have been the case with a great many more.

But, by Dr. *Stebbing's* leave, this is not *all* the business. For, when the church hath turned the poor man adrift, it may be, some body might take him in, if he could but give a good reason why he did not comply with the church. In these cases, no reason is comparable to the *true* one: which would be, that he could not in conscience subscribe the xxxix Articles, as he did not believe them to be agreeable to the word of God. But here the church lays her hands on him with a vengeance. For by uttering an excuse to this effect, he incurs excommunication *ipso facto*; that is (according to *Lyndwood*) *nullo hominis ministerio interveniente*; and is not to be restored, but only by the Archbishop.

By this excommunication, the courteous reader may be pleased to know, that *no more* happens to the unhappy mortal, than that he is deprived of the communion; his person sequestered from the conversation and society of the *faithful* (meaning all who are *not* excommunicate); and if his conscience should not become more tractable within forty days, he may be committed to prison by the King's writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, — where he must lie and rot till he recants; for the Archbishop himself cannot absolve him, till after *repentance* and *revocation* of his *wicked error*.

All this while, the church of *England* compels no man to subscribe! That is to say, she does not force the pen into his hand, and oblige him to sign his name à coups de baton. But — let us bless God for the lenity of the civil Magistrate; “who, as “the rev. Dr. *Jortin* observes, is of excellent use “in preventing us from doing one another any “bodily harm.” For, that the church of *England* is at all out of conceit with any part, either of her doctrine or discipline, does by no means appear by some late public indications of her judgment herein <sup>n</sup>.

Thus stands the real naked fact; and pitiable enough it is to make men glad of any subterfuges and expedients of latitude, even those narrow ones of Dr. *Waterland*. But, alas! we see by the concessions the Doctor himself was obliged to make, that we are of course brought back to the single sense of the compilers; the only sense indeed espoused by, or legally authenticated in, the church of *England*. An hard necessity upon so orthodox a son of the church, either to be obliged to prevaricate with the naughty *Arians*, or to be disowned by his venerable mother, as none of her legitimate offspring.

“If, instead of excusing a fraudulent subscription, says the Doctor, on the foot of human infirmity, (which yet is too soft a name for it)

<sup>n</sup> See the Convocation’s Address, 1754, where it is hinted, that the church of *England* hath no equal.

“endeavours



“endeavours are used to defend it upon principle, and to support it by rules of art; it concerns every honest man to look about him. For what is so vile and shameful but may be set off with false colours, and have a plausible turn given it, by the help of quirks and subtilties.”

I have the misfortune to think, that this wise reflection concerned Dr. *Waterland*, no less than those for whose more immediate use he intended it. All of them were made sore by subscription. All of them wanted, and all of them applied, the plaster of quirks and subtilties, in their turn.

A man of principle will never be driven to make use of quirks and subtilties, till he finds himself bound to some unreasonable and unrighteous conditions. And they who desire such quirks and subtilties should not be made use of, should be careful, not to lay snares, or stumbling blocks, in the way of honest men, that they may be under no temptation to prevaricate.

A good and conscientious Christian, in matters of practice, can do little harm by his mistaken opinions. If they have no evil influence upon his own life and conversation, others cannot be far misled by them. And it is a very possible case, that such a one may be a more edifying teacher, with respect to those points which are of

\* Case, &c. p. 4.

## 198 THE CONFESSIONAL

the utmost importance, and concerning which few men are liable to err, than he who is warmed with the most sublimed spirit of orthodoxy.

Let such a one alone to follow his conscience, and he will be sincere, faithful and diligent in dispensing the word of God, according to his best information. But if you have a mind to make a knave of him, you cannot take a more effectual method, than to contrive tests for his disputable opinions, with which he cannot comply without quirks and subtilties; and with which if he does not comply, you deprive him of the means of getting his bread, in the only way he is qualified to earn it.

Upon the whole; we have now seen that every system of latitude is, in some particular or other, exceptionable to every one, but the particular person who invents it for his own use. It is not possible this should be the case, if the compilers of the Articles had really intended *any* latitude, or the laws concerning subscription had left room for it. Bishop *Burnet* plainly saw that subscribers were bound to the single sense of the compilers before *His Majesty's Declaration* was issued, which, by the said Bishop, was understood to admit of subscription in *any* literal and grammatical sense, even though it should be different from, and even contradictory to, *another* literal and grammatical sense.

But,

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 199

But, says Dr. *Waterland*, — “His [Majesty’s] order is, that every subscriber submit to the Article in the *plain and full meaning thereof*, in the *literal and grammatical sense*. What? is the *plain and full meaning*, more than *one meaning*? or is the *one plain and full meaning*, *two contradictory meanings*? Could it be for the Honour of the Article, or of the King to say “this? No —.”

And so there’s an end of Bishop *Burnet’s* scheme of Latitude, as it rests upon this Declaration: But then, Dr. *Waterland* could work another scheme out of it for his *own use*, by making the *plain and full meaning*, to signify a *general meaning*, exclusive of *all particular senses*; — till, wanting to plague and starve the *Arians*, he found out, that the sense of the Articles relating to the *Trinity*, was *not general*, but *special, particular, and determinate*.

If the subject were not too serious, one might find abundant matter of mirthful entertainment, in the *quirks and subtilties* of these eminent Doctors. But should we laugh at them, no doubt but we should be told, that we wounded the church and religion through their sides. We shall therefore content ourselves with recommending to them to consider, how far this ridiculous self-contradicting casuistry may have been instrumental in giving dissenters a contemptible opinion of our church and her discipline, and in making our holy religion itself (though in reali-

ty it has nothing to do, either with the casuists or the casuistry) the sport and scorn of infidels.

I do not doubt, but some persons will be curious to know, how it was possible for men so famous in their generation, who were so learned, judicious, and penetrating in other things P, and who all thought they were driving the same nail, to be so contradictory and inconsistent, not only

¶ We shall have the less reason to be surprized at this, when we duly weigh a reflection of the excellent Dr. Lardner's upon some passages of Zosimus. "We have here," says this respectable writer, "another proof, that the change of religion was continually, upon all occasions, represented as hazardous to the state. And we may farther observe, that no religion can be so absurd and unreasonable, especially when it has been established, and of a long time, that will not find men of good abilities, not only to palliate and excuse, but also to approve and justify and recommend its greatest absurdities." *Collection of Jewish and Heathen Testimonies*, Vol. iv. p. 274. Dr. Rutherford hath said, *Charge*, p. 5. "Take away the legal emoluments of the ministry; and though you leave subscriptions, these useful ministers, as they are called, will make no complaint of their being under the dilemma of either subscribing to our articles, or of not enjoying the liberty of preaching the gospel." *Legal Emoluments* have, I conjecture, as fast hold upon orthodox, as heretical spirits; and one might say with equal truth and justice, "Take away the legal emoluments from the ministry, and though you leave subscriptions, few would be at the pains to defend them." Zosimus indeed appears to have been disinterested, but he was a bigotted pagan, "a poor superstitious creature," as Dr. Bentley called him. It is not unreasonable to suppose that legal emoluments in possession, and still greater in expectation, may sharpen a dullish genius, and give portions of apprehension and abilities, on some subjects, even where nature has denied them on all others.

with



with each other, but even with themselves? Let such curious inquirers know then, that all these experienced workmen were endeavouring to repair, and *daub with untempered mortar*, certain *strongholds* and *partition walls*, which it was the design of the Gospel to throw down and to level. An attempt of this sort could hardly be more agreeable to the Divine will, than the building at *Babel*. And no marvel that the *Craftsmen* should meet with the like success. That is to say, that their language should be confounded, and rendered unintelligible both to each other, and to all who are otherwise concerned to understand it.

It is true, these particular Doctors are all gone off the stage. But they have left plenty of disciples behind them, who affect to speak the jargon of their respective masters. And it is certain, that, while our subscriptions continue upon the present footing, there will be no end of *accusing* on one side, or of *recriminating* on the other. Let us, at length, come to some temper with each other; and, if a form of words cannot be agreed upon, which every Christian minister may subscribe willingly, and with a good conscience, let us join in a petition to the legislature, that the expedient proposed, not long ago, in one of our *Monthly* pamphlets, may receive the sanction of law; namely, that the affair of subscription should henceforth be considered in no other light, than as *An Office of insurance for our respective preferences*.

## C H A P. VI.

*A particular Examination of the Sentiments and Reasonings of those Writers who have pleaded for a Latitude in subscribing to the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England, upon the Supposition that every Protestant Church must act consistently with its professing to assert and maintain Christian Liberty.*

**I** Am now entering, not without regret, upon the most disagreeable part of my undertaking, namely, that of declaring, and giving reasons for my dissatisfaction with such arguments, as the sons of *truth* and *liberty* have offered, by way of justifying their compliance with the church in this demand of subscription to her Liturgy and Articles.

When we consider the irresistible force and perspicuity of that reasoning, by which some of these worthies (when debating the question concerning church-power in the abstract) have demonstrated the unreasonableness of that demand, as well as the inconsistency of it with the professions of every Protestant church, one cannot but lament, that, to the laurels they gained in that disputation, they did not add the glory of becoming confessors to their own principles, and of rather declining the affluence of a plentiful income,

income, or the figure of a superior station, than accept of these emoluments on conditions, which must have been imposed upon them with some violence to their inclinations.

It is true, some of these have said, that "the reasonableness of conformity to the church of *England* is perfectly consistent with the rights of private judgment \*." But they must only mean, of *their own* private judgment. For it is well known, that others who dissent from the church of *England*, are clearly justified in such dissent, upon those very principles which these *conforming* writers have laid down; and consequently, the *nonconformity* of the *one* is just as *reasonable* as the *conformity* of the *other*. On the other hand, it is equally well known, that the most eminent and successful defenders of our church-establishment, are *they* who have attacked these principles of liberty, and have proceeded upon the supposition that the private judgment of individuals ought to give way to the authority of the church; being well aware that, if these theories of Christian liberty are allowed to stand upon a firm foundation, it would be impossible to vindicate the church of *England*, with respect to the particulars of her constitution. And therefore I must own, I never could see how the authors and defenders of these theories could make their conformity consistent with the enjoyment

\* Dr. Sykes's Answer to Rogers's Visible and Invisible Church of Christ, p. 6,

of their rights of private judgment, otherwise than by supposing that it might be *reasonable* for them to submit to conditions, which it is *unreasonable* in the church to impose.

In the mean time, their adversaries have long and loudly accused them of prevarication, in complying with the church; which, whether the accusation be just or not, has certainly taken much from the influence they might have had, both with the true friends of Christian liberty, and the partial and prejudiced retainers to church power. On which account it has been a great misfortune to the present generation, and will be a greater to the next, that these gentlemen did not stand aloof a little longer, till they had tried at least what concessions the church would have made them, rather than have wanted their services, which, under all disadvantages, have been so great an honour and ornament to her.

What might not the firmness of an *Hales* and a *Chillingworth* formerly, or more lately of a *Clarke* or an *Hoadley*, have obtained for us by this time? Which of us all, abused and vilified as these men have been, by bigots of different classes, would have wished to have seen them in another communion? And who is he that will affirm, the church established has lost nothing by depriving these champions of the power of adding to their victories over the spiritual tyranny of *Rome*, a complete and solid vindication of her own doctrine, discipline, and worship?

But



But that day is past and gone beyond recall; with this cold comfort indeed, that these worthy men have left their principles to those among us, who are inclined to profit by them. From these principles, compared with their practice, we cannot but judge they were under some small constraint, touching the subject now in hand. And if it should be found, upon a fair examination, that, for the sake of preserving the appearance of consistency, they have set their apologies for subscribing in a light which has thrown back the real truth into shade and obscurity; it is but justice to bring it once more forward to public view; if haply a circumstance in our discipline, which has more or less turned to our reproach with Dissenters of all denominations, may at length be either quite discarded, or put into a condition fit to be owned by every honest man and sincere Protestant among us.

The controversy with Dr. *Waterland*, concerning what he thought fit to call *Arian* subscription, took its rise, it seems, from some passages in Dr. *Clarke's* Introduction to his *Scripture-doctrine of the Trinity*, wherein that learned and excellent person (conscious that the contents of his book would hardly be thought to agree with the established forms of the church) thought proper to apprize his readers, that the church of *England* did not mean more by subscription, nor require more of subscribers, than that they should conform their opinions to the true sense of scripture;

the

the investigation of which sense, he supposes, was by the church left to the subscriber himself; otherwise, that the church must be inconsistent with her own plain and repeated declarations.

With Dr. *Clarke* therefore we shall begin, the rather as Dr. *Clarke's* reasonings upon this subject have prevailed with some to comply with the church's subscription, who are now ready to own that they think those reasonings insufficient for their justification.

The Doctor's state of the case then is briefly this: "At the Reformation, religion began to  
 "recover, in a great measure, out of the great  
 "Apostacy: when the doctrine of Christ and his  
 "Apostles was again *declared* to be the only rule  
 "of truth, in which were contained all things  
 "necessary to faith and manners. And *had that*  
 "*declaration constantly been adhered to*, and human  
 "authority in matters of faith been disclaimed in  
 "DEEDS, as well as in WORDS, there had been  
 "possibly no more schisms in the church of God,  
 "nor divisions of any considerable moment among  
 "Protestants. — But, though contentions  
 "and uncharitableness have prevailed in practice,  
 "yet (thanks be to God) the root of unity hath  
 "continued amongst us; and the scripture hath  
 "universally been *declared* to be the only rule of  
 "truth, a sufficient guide both in faith and practice;  
 "and those who differ in opinion, have  
 "done so only because each party has thought  
 "their own opinion founded in scripture; and  
 "men

“men are required to receive things because,  
 “and only because, they are found (and conse-  
 “quently *in no other sense* than [that] wherein  
 “they are found) in the holy scriptures. Where-  
 “fore, in any question of controversy concerning  
 “a matter of *faith*, Protestants are obliged (for  
 “the deciding of it) to have recourse to no other  
 “authority whatsoever, but that of scripture  
 “only <sup>b</sup>.”

This is specious: And the time was, as I said, when, by this deduction of particulars, the Doctor seemed to me to be fairly entitled to his consequence, which is, that a man may honestly subscribe the thirty-nine Articles of the church of *England*, accommodated to the sense of scripture, as he himself understands it. And certainly words and oaths cannot disclaim human authority, in matters of faith, with more vehemence and precision, whether on the part of the church, or some of her most eminent doctors, than is done in the citations that follow this representation.

But, upon having recourse to these passages upon a *second* occasion, a sudden question forced itself upon me, and would take no denial; *viz.* How stand the DEEDS in the church of *England*? *These* words indeed are plain; but is there nothing in the *acts* and *deeds* of this church, which implies that *these* are *but* words? And are there

<sup>b</sup> Introduct. to Script. Doct. of the *Trinity*, Ed. 2. p. viii, ix, x.

*no other* words, which directly unsay what is said in these? Why yes. It will be found upon examination, that the DEEDS of the church of *England* are very plain and strong on the side of human authority, disclaiming in their turn these verbal declarations of the Protestant religion, by many formal acts and ordinances, and contravening them in some instances, where there seems to be some outward respect paid to them.

Men, it is true, are required to receive things for no other *given* cause, and upon no other *declared* authority, than because they are found in scripture, and in no other sense but that in which they are *said* to be *so* found. But, *in fact*, we are allowed to receive these things in no other sense, than that in which the church *declares* *she* hath found them herself; which is sometimes a sense, that the person obliged to *receive* it is not able to find, let him search for it with ever so much capacity and diligence. So that, though Protestants are obliged by their *original* principles to adhere to no other authority whatever than that of the scripture; yet, by coming under *posterior* engagements and stipulations with the church of *England* by law established, and particularly by acknowledging that this church *hath* *authority in controversies of faith*, they are obliged to take her interpretations of scripture, not only in preference to, but in exclusion of *their own*.

Dr. *Waterland* indeed says, "that no man is  
" required by the church to subscribe [that is, to



"receive things] against his conscience, or in a sense which he thinks not agreeable to scripture <sup>c</sup>."

That is to say, if a man cannot bring himself to subscribe in the church's sense, as thinking *that* sense not agreeable to scripture, he may let subscribing alone, without any censure or punishment.

But Dr. *Waterland* knew very well, and so did Dr. *Clarke* too, that such a one refusing to subscribe, or to receive things in the church's sense, would be understood, in that instance, to decline any engagements with the church, and, in so doing, to forfeit all the advantages that would have accrued from his compliance; which may happen to be his whole livelihood.

Dr. *Waterland* could not mean, that the church censures no man for subscribing in a sense which he thinks agreeable to scripture, but contrary to the church's sense. For he himself hath shewn the contrary, especially where such subscriber avows his own sense. And, with respect to other cases, the Doctor observes very pertinently, that "The connivance and toleration of superiors at offences does not take away the guilt of such offences <sup>d</sup>." The prescribed form of subscription plainly supposes the man who sets his name

<sup>c</sup> Case, p. 16.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

to it, to subscribe in the church's sense. And what occasion or what room have superiors either to exercise or declare any censures, when the subscriber signs his name quietly and peaceably to the prescribed form, without saying a syllable against it?

Dr. Clarke says, "If tradition, custom, carelessness, or mistake, have put a sense upon human forms, disagreeable to scripture, a man is indispensably bound not to understand or receive them in that sense."

That is, indispensably bound *in conscience*. True. But if that *mistaken* sense is not barely put there by a private and mistaken man, but bound upon, and incorporated with the human form, by public authority, this *not understanding it*, or *not receiving it*, will just amount to *not subscribing it*.

"The church," saith the Doctor, "hath no legislative authority<sup>†</sup>." We agree to this likewise. Bishop Hoadley, and before him St. Paul, have proved it beyond the possibility of an answer. But, in this case of subscription, the question is not what power the church *hath of right*, but what power she *exercises*. It is very possible for a man to wave or to give up his rights, whether civil or religious, to an *usurped* authority.

"Every man," saith Dr. Clarke, "that, for the sake of peace and order [*let me add*, or for a

\* Introduct. p. xxiii.

† *Apud* Case of *Arian* Subscription, p. 21.

"main-

"maintenance], assents to, or makes use of, human forms, is *obliged* to reconcile and understand them in such a sense only as appears to him to be consistent with the doctrine of scripture; otherwise he parts with his Christianity, "for the sake of a civil and political religion &."

The Doctor means, *obliged in conscience*, and as a *Protestant*. But, suppose he cannot reconcile and understand these human forms *in such sense only*, or even *at all*, (which is not an impossible case); what is he obliged to then? — May not such a man, as the case is here put, be *obliged* so to understand, reconcile, and assent to Pope *Pius's* creed, or a chapter in the *Koran*, upon the same considerations?

But the true case is really this: Protestant churches ought not to employ human powers to establish religion upon civil and political principles, nor ought conscientious Christians to receive their religion so established. But, if Protestant churches, so called, *have done this*, and approved by *deeds* what they have disclaimed in *words*, they have left the *consistent* Christian no option, but either to comply with those churches upon *civil* and *political* principles, or to decline all *doctrinal* connexion with them.

To what Dr. Clarke says (*Introduct.* p. xvii.) concerning the *declarations* of the church in the sixth, twentieth, and twenty-first Articles, as giving countenance to his scheme of subscription;

\* Case of *Arian* Subscription, p. 23.

## 212 THE CONFESSIONAL.

Dr. *Waterland* answers, " That these declarations  
 " amount to no more, than that nothing is to be  
 " received, but what is agreeable to scripture.  
 " And for this very reason the church requires  
 " subscription in *her own sense*, because she judges  
 " *no other* sense to be agreeable to scripture.<sup>b</sup>"

This is indeed giving the church but a very indifferent character, representing her as *insinuating one thing, and meaning another*. But, if it is a true character, who can help it? The church, perhaps, might suppose, that the scripture could never be more accurately interpreted, than she had interpreted it in her Articles. Be that how it would, her own interpretation of it in these Articles, is the only one she admits of, exclusive of all other senses. And therefore Dr. *Waterland* is fairly entitled to his conclusion, " If any judge  
 " that the church's own sense is not agreeable  
 " to scripture, let them not subscribe."

" When in the public forms," says Dr. *Clarke*,  
 " there be (as there generally are) expressions  
 " which, *at first sight*, look different ways, it can-  
 " not be but men must be allowed to interpret  
 " what is obscure, by that which seems to them  
 " more plain and scriptural<sup>i</sup>."

Another advocate on the same side expresseth this matter thus: " Unless this liberty be allowed"  
 (i. e. the liberty of subscribing the Articles in  
*any* sense the words will bear, and in which they

<sup>b</sup> Case of *Arian* Subscription, p. 25.

<sup>i</sup> Ibid. p. 26.



may be reconciled to (*the subscribers own sense of*) scripture, and to the other authorized forms of the church), "no body can subscribe the Articles, "Creeds, and Liturgy of the church of *England* "at all; there are several things in these forms, "which, if taken in the most obvious sense, con- "tradict one another \*."

No matter for that; if you subscribe them, they must be *so* taken. For who can give you the liberty you desire? Not the Bishops, nor even the Legislature without a new law; and then surely no private man has the power to *take* this liberty of himself. "No man, says *Phileleutherus*, "without this liberty can subscribe our public "forms." Without what liberty? Why the liberty of *reconciling contradictions*. Did *Phileleutherus* consider to what this liberty may amount? What is there that, *with this liberty*, a man cannot subscribe? Might not the most crude system of Paganism be made good Christian divinity, by putting a *less obvious* sense upon it?

Let us see how Dr. *Waterland* provides against this inconvenience. "Sometimes, says he, (in "our public forms) the *Father* is stiled *only God*; "oftener *all three*. Sometimes *two* of the persons "are introduced, in a *subordination of order* to the "*first*. At other times, their perfect equality of "nature" (which, by the way, excludes all sorts

\* Essay on imposing, &c. by *Phileleutherus Cantabrigiensi*,  
P. 43.

and degrees of subordination, for *subordination of order*, is nonsense) "is as fully and clearly proved<sup>1</sup>."

These, I suppose, are the *contradictions* and *obscurities*, or some of them, objected by Dr. Clarke, and *Phileleutherus*. But Dr. Waterland will have it, that all here is easy and consistent; "because what goes before or after them, and "other passages in our public forms, REQUIRE "that they should be *consistent*." In consequence of which, Dr. Waterland is for putting a *less obvious sense* upon those passages which seem, at first sight, to contravene a *perfect equality* in the God-head.

Would this ridiculous sophistry of *Waterland's* have gone down with Dr. Clarke and his party? By no means. And yet they proceed upon the same principle, when they would put a *less obvious sense* upon the passages which affirm a *perfect equality*; namely, because the plain scriptural doctrine of a *subordination of nature*, REQUIRES this *less obvious sense* to be put upon those passages, that all may be *clear and consistent*.

But who sees not that *all* these several senses are established in our public forms? Who sees not that, in the eye of the law, and in the *intention* of the church, every subscriber subscribes to them *all*? And consequently, that in subscribing, Dr. Waterland was an *Arian*, and Dr. Clarke an

<sup>1</sup> *Waterland's Case*, &c. p. 30, 31.

*Athanasian*, as often as they *received* these inconsistent forms, respectively, by subscribing them.

In one word, all *Dr. Clarke's* arguments, that I have seen, tend only to prove, that in truth, and reason, and common justice, and common sense, such and such things ought not to have been imposed upon Christians in Protestant churches; which he and others have done with all possible precision and perspicuity. But not one of them hath been able to shew, that such things *are not* imposed. *Dr. Clarke*, indeed, has as good as confessed the fact, in the long passage I have cited from his *Introduction*. And hath more than supposed it, in the suggestions at the end of his book, concerning the expediency of a *Review* of our ecclesiastical forms. For if all these liberties in *assenting* to and *subscribing* these forms are given, and may be *honestly* and *conscientiously* taken, the occasion for a *Review*, or, in other words, for altering these forms, cannot be so very pressing as he would represent it.

The next advocate for this liberty and latitude in our subscriptions, is the acute writer of *The Case of Subscription*, &c. in answer to *Dr. Waterland's Case of Arian Subscription*<sup>m</sup>. But as this Gentleman argues chiefly from *Dr. Waterland's* concessions, and from *that* in particular which imports that *some* of the Articles are left indeterminate, there is not much in his pamphlet which

<sup>m</sup> Commonly supposed to be *Dr. Sykes*.

has not already fallen under our notice. Some things, however, deserve our farther consideration.

The first remarkable occurrence in this performance, is the great stress that is laid upon King *Charles I's* Declaration, which gave the latitudinarian subscribers the first hint of *general, literal, and grammatical* senses. It has been proved before, that this rescript is of no manner of validity. But suppose it, for the present, to have the validity of a royal Declaration; what would be its operation? Just the same with that of King *James II's Declaration for liberty of Conscience*: which went upon the pretence, that there was a power in the Crown to dispense with the Statute-Law of the land. The xxxix Articles in *Charles I's* time had as strong a statute on their side, as any of those which excluded Papists from offices of trust or power in the reign of *James II.* The title of these Articles was recognized in the Act of the 13th of *Elizabeth*. And that title set forth, that they were agreed upon *for the preventing diversities of opinions*, and consequently, for the preventing of all *general, literal, or grammatical* senses, which *admitted diversities of opinions*. King *Charles's* Declaration then, which is understood to have introduced *these* senses, and thereby to have allowed of *diversities of opinions*, was just as *subversive* of the *ecclesiastical*, as King *James's* was of the *civil* constitution. I have indeed said elsewhere, that I do not understand the Declaration before the Articles in this light. I offer this therefore



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 219

therefore only as an argument *ad hominem*, which might have put this ingenious person to some trouble to vindicate his Revolution-principles, of which he was known to be a strenuous and successful assertor.

What he says from *Fuller's Church-History of Britain*, is something (and but very little) more considerable. It concerns *Rogers's Exposition of the xxxix Articles*. "Some Protestants, according to *Fuller*, conceived it presumption for any private minister to make himself the mouth of the church, to render her sense in matters of so high concernment. Others were offended, that he [*Rogers*] confined the charitable latitude, formerly allowed in these Articles; the composers whereof, providently foreseeing differences of opinions, purposely couched the Articles in general terms, &c."

Now, I would desire to know what there is in this censure extraordinary? or what there is in it that affects *Rogers's Exposition*, more than the sentiments of particular readers affect any other new book that is published? and particularly, any exposition of these Articles?

Bishop *Burnet*, in the History of his own times, gives us an account of the ill reception his *Exposition* met with among some church-of-England

<sup>a</sup> *Case of Subscr. occasioned, &c.* p. 14. See this fancy of Dr. *Fuller's* effectually overthrown in a pamphlet intitled, *Remarks on the Rev. Dr. Powell's Sermon in Defence of Subscriptions*, p. 46. c. 9. G printed for Millar, 1758.

## 218 THE CONFESSIONAL.

men, and records an attempt to censure it even in the Convocation, particularly because of his asserting, that men might subscribe the Articles in any *literal* or *grammatical* sense the words would bear.

Would the author of *the Case* allow these censures to be a good argument, that the composers of the Articles intended *no* latitude? Or would he allow them, without some farther circumstance of proof, to invalidate *His Majesty's Declaration*, under the wing of which the Bishop asserts this latitude?

If not, what proof can he draw from *Fuller's* historical account of a matter of fact, that *Rogers* was in the wrong, and that the composers of the Articles *did* really intend a latitude?

Probably it will be said, that the censurers of *Rogers's* book, living nearer the times of the composers than Bishop *Burnet's* opponents, had a better opportunity to know whether they intended a latitude or not. But to this it would be sufficient to answer, that *Rogers* himself, living nearer those times than either Bishop *Burnet*, or even *Fuller* himself, must be better acquainted with the minds of the composers than either of these historians; and full as well as any of his censurers. So that from this kind of presumptive reasoning no truth arises, either on the one side or the other.

If we go farther into particulars, *Rogers* has greatly the advantage of all that come after him, in point of authority. His book was dedicated

to

to Archbishop Bancroft, whose chaplain he was; and bears in the front of it a testimony, that it was perused, and, by the lawful authority of the church of England, allowed to be public.

° Both they who said in Fuller's days, that Rogers made himself the mouth of the church as a *private minister*, and they who, in these later times, have denied that the said Rogers had the authority he pretends to in his title-page, were mistaken. The appointed licensers of books, at that time, were the chaplains of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishop of London, and sometimes of other Bishops. Rogers was chaplain to Archbishop Bancroft, and as such had (what was then esteemed a *lawful*) authority to give books their passport to the press. But to have given a formal *imprimatur* in his own name, to his own book, would have had an odd appearance. He therefore chose to signify the approbation of his book in the manner he has done. And as there can be no doubt but he took Bancroft's sense of the matter for his rule, he certainly had the authority of the church of England for publishing his book; and became the mouth of the church, upon the strength of that authority; and did not *make himself* the mouth of the church, as a *private minister*. On the other hand, Bishop Burnet, who had the private concurrence and encouragement of Archbishop Tennison and several others of the bench, declares that his Exposition was *not a work of authority*; nor do any of the rest who have written upon the subject pretend to it, except Welchman, and he indeed brings an *Imprimatur* from a Deputy Vicechancellor of Oxford, who certainly was not the mouth of the church. This book of Rogers's then is the only authoritative exposition we have of the Articles; though Welchman's is the book in vogue for the examination of candidates, and hath passed through no less than *ten* editions, *six* Latin, and *four* English, and all with considerable variations from Rogers, particularly in the article of *scripture proofs*, some of which, in Welchman, are something worse than nothing to the purpose. And as to the other explanations and authorities that Welchman

That

"That in our Articles, says this writer, a latitude was designed to be given to, and therefore may be taken by, the subscriber, is no new opinion, or of nine or ten years standing only, is evident?"

That the opinion is not new, is indeed evident from *Fuller*. But *opinion* is one thing, and *fact* is another. That such latitude was really designed, never has been, nor ever can be proved. It was *Dr. Waterland's opinion*, with respect to the Calvinistical Articles. But this very Author of the *Case* hath, in answer to *Waterland's Supplement*, made it sufficiently evident, that the Doctor's opinion was groundless. And if so, the Doctor might effectually have turned the tables upon him, with respect to the Articles concerning the Trinity, in some of which the compilers of 1562 have taken away the little appearance of latitude there was in the Articles of *K. Edward 9.*

This opinion of a latitude intended to be given to subscribers of the Articles is indeed only matter of oral tradition, bred out of the distress of some particular persons, who desired to keep a good conscience, and not to part with a good be-

brings, it is remarkable that he is ten times more *restrictive*, with respect to a particular determinate sense, than *Rogers* himself. And therefore, though the fathers of our church do not choose to own *Welchman*, otherwise than by their *practices*, the very use they make of him shews, that they are by no means in love with a *laxity* of interpretation.

\* *Case* occasioned, &c. p. 14.

† See Remarks on *Powell's Sermon*, p. 51.



## THE CONFESSIONAL 221

ness. One would think, by *Fuller's* manner of representing the censures upon *Rogers*, that there had been a cloud of witnesses for this *intended* latitude. But, when he had occasion to defend his position, he could name only King *James*, who had no better proof of it than another man; *viz.* the occasion he had for this hypothesis when he was veering about to the *Arminians*.

Nothing is more evident, in the ecclesiastical histories of those times, than that Queen *Elizabeth's* Bishops either had no notion that *latitude* and *toleration* were Gospel-privileges, or an utter aversion to such notion, as schismatical and puritanical. Their own hardships under Queen *Mary* had taught them very little compassion for dissenters, when the rod of correction came into their own hands, though honest *Fuller* would have had it believed, that it was a consideration of this sort, that brought forth this *discreet laxity* in wording the Articles; in which there is just as much truth, as there is common sense in his supposing them to have *prediscovered* the dissensions, that would happen in the church an hundred years after they were dead.

But the ingenious author of the *Case*, besides bringing these authorities, berthinks himself of pleading for this latitude from the reason of the thing.

"He that composes a form of words, says he,  
 "either so *inaccurately*, or so *designedly*, as that the  
 "propositions contained in them, in the usual  
 "literal

## 222 THE CONFESSIONAL.

"literal construction, may or do signify different things, has no reason to complain of prevarication, if men of very different notions unite in subscribing such form."

But the church denies that this is her case. She declares her Articles were not *so* composed, either *inaccurately* or *designedly*. The fallacy of this reasoning consists in the *Casuiſt's* supposing, that the usual literal construction of words is *not always the same*. When the church set forth these forms of words, the usual literal construction of them was but *one*. If time, and the mutability of language, have given room for *another* usual, literal construction of these words or forms, the church cannot help that, because she could not foresee it. They who understand *both* constructions (as all scholars do), know very well, that the *old* one is the church's construction; and therefore they who put the *new* construction upon the church's *old* words, or forms,—*they*, I say, and not the compilers of the Articles, are the *inaccurate* persons, and, as such, are justly complained of for *prevaricating*. And indeed all the subsequent sophistry of this writer turns upon what he calls, the *natural* and *proper* signification of words. *Natural* and *proper*, with respect to the signification of such words in *modern usage*, were, he well knows, though he chooses to dissemble it, *unnatural* and *improper*, in the year 1562.

Let

Let us now take a view of another sincere friend to religious liberty, who wrote a pamphlet, much esteemed, in the year 1719, under the name of *Phileleutherus Camabrigiensis*, intitled *An Essay on imposing and subscribing Articles of Religion*.

This very sensible writer begins with making allowances for an (humanly) established authority in matters ecclesiastical. (And, by the way, makes a great many more allowances than he ought to have made \*.) After which he insists, that, "no Articles, as a Rule and Standard of doctrinal preaching, ought to be imposed, because of the great danger that the right of Christians to *private judgment* incurs by such imposition; notwithstanding which, he is of opinion, that, "for the sake of peace, a man may submit to an usurpation upon this right, provided he *believes* what is contained in the Articles."

When he comes to explain what he means by *believing* what is contained in the Articles, it appears to be, "*believing* them in any sense the words will admit of." In consequence of which, he takes some pains to shew, that "these Articles may be subscribed (and consequently believed) by a *Sabellian*, an orthodox *Trinitarian* (whose opinion he calls nonsense), a *Therist*, and an *Arian* so called."

\* See *An Apology for a Protestant Dissent*, printed for Burnt, 1755, p. 28, 29.

One would wonder what idea this writer had of *peace*, when he supposed it might be kept by the act of subscription, among men of these different judgments. Why might not the same men, with equal safety to the peace of the church, subscribe *four* several forms of words, each expressing his own system clearly and explicitly, as subscribe *the same* form of words, in *four* different senses?

But did this Gentleman, in good earnest, believe, that the compilers of the Articles *intended* to make room for these *four* several senses? I will answer for him. — He did not believe it. We all know, by the title of the Articles, and he knew it as well as any of us, that the sense of the compilers was but *one* sense; and that sense being bound upon the subscriber by law, it is plain that three of the senses abovementioned are excluded, both in the intention of the compilers, and by the tenor of the law which establishes the Articles, and enjoins subscription to them.

Let us now look back to his principles. Why ought not such Articles to be imposed upon Christian Preachers, as a test? He does not, indeed, answer this question in plain terms; but his principles lead us to a very just and proper answer to it; namely, because the subject of preaching in a Christian Church, is the Gospel of Christ, over which no human power can have any controul, or exercise any, without incurring the guilt of setting up another Gospel, under another



other authority, distinct from HIS, who hath declared himself to be the ONE Master to whom all Christians ought to submit. Would this Gentleman have asserted *totidem verbis*, that we may give up our Christian liberty to those who *usurp* the province of Christ? He makes use, indeed, of the word *usurpation*, but he refers it only to *the right of private judgment*; and of this *right* or *liberty*, he makes little doubt; but a man may *abridge himself*, p. 33.

But upon what is this *right* founded? Is it not solely upon those principles of the Gospel, that Christ is King in his own Kingdom? That he is the only Lord and Master in matters pertaining to conscience? And can any man give way to an usurpation of that authority, which Christ claims solely to himself, without revolting from his allegiance, and submitting to an usurper of his Kingdom?

Here let us stop. There is no occasion to proceed a step further, or to enquire upon what notions of latitude in the Articles the *Essayer* could reconcile his subscription to them with his obligations to *stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made him free*. Upon which subject he hath indeed brought no more than hath been answered already.

There is yet another writer upon this subject, of the same complexion, who must not be wholly passed by, as he hath been at the pains to sum  
up

## 226 THE CONFESSIONAL

of the whole merits of this case in a few words.

"If," says he, "we consider ourselves as members of the church of England, we are not obliged to an uniformity of opinion."

In other words, the church of England, as such, hath no uniform doctrine; which, whatever the matter of fact may be, the church, I apprehend, will not take for a compliment. But this idle notion being built entirely on *His Majesty's Declaration*, falls to the ground along with that. He goes on:

"If the Legislature do not think fit to determine in what particular sense the subscriber shall give his assent, it is very possible and well known, that persons of quite opposite opinions may and do subscribe."

Hath the legislature then determined, that men may subscribe the Articles in opposite senses? No. If not, then, hath the legislature determined any thing about articles and subscriptions? Yes, it hath determined that the xxxix Articles shall be subscribed, for the purpose of avoiding diversities of opinions. The legislature then hath determined that the Articles shall be subscribed only in *one* sense respectively; and that is, in the most obvious sense of each Article.

In a pamphlet intituled, *The external Peace of the Church only attainable by a Zeal for Scripture in its just Latitude*, 1716, printed for Baker.

"The

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 227

"The sense," saith this author, "which such  
 \* as require subscriptions *accept* and *tolerate*, is  
 " to be the rule of subscription."

This matter is put in a wrong light. It is the  
 Law, and the Law only, which *requireth* sub-  
 scription; and "*requireth* that it should be made  
 \* before the Ordinary, that is, in the presence  
 " of the person who institutes. The Ordinary  
 \* is not bound to offer the Articles to be sub-  
 \* scribed; but the Clerk himself is bound to  
 " offer to subscribe them; and he must subscribe  
 " without any reserve, exception, or qualifica-  
 " tion \*."

The *canonical* subscription is indeed another  
 affair, of which there is no present occasion to say  
 any thing, as the question *here* is only concerning  
 subscription, as enjoined by the legislature. And  
 enough has been said of this to refute our author's  
 fancy about *accepting* and *tolerating* senses.

The author concludes thus: " Since the church  
 " therefore *accepts* and *tolerates* contrary opinions,  
 " 'tis plain the church does not conceive identity  
 " of opinion necessary to her tranquillity."

The church, as we have seen, *accepts* or *tole-  
 rates* nothing, but what the Law allows her to  
*accept* and *tolerate*: which is just the reverse of  
*contrary opinions*. The notion indeed is absurd,  
 even so far as there is any colour to apply it to  
 the church. If the church *accepts* and *tolerates*,

\* *Vade Mecum*, p. 79. under *Institution*.

she likewise *espouses* and *maintains* contrary opinions. For the persons, whose contrary opinions she *accepts* and *tolerates*, do, by this very act of subscription, become part of the body of the church herself, and most commonly are the very mouth of the church; and retail their *contrary opinions* to the public, by the very authority which the church gives them. Is not this to lift the church off her ancient foundations? Or rather is it not to own the justice of that reproach, "That the church of *England*, properly so called, is "not now existing"?"

There were several others of this way of thinking, who bore a part in this controversy, but, as they all went into the church at the same door which Dr. *Clarke* had opened for them, and be-

" See a pamphlet intituled, *Observations upon the Conduct of the Clergy in relation to the thirty-nine Articles*. "These "strictures of Religion," (says this excellent writer, (meaning the thirty-nine Articles) "are either a rule of teaching in "this church, or they are not a rule. If they are not a rule, "what constitutes the church of *England*? If they be a rule "and a standard, where must be grounded the authority of "modern teaching, which is not only not agreeable to these "Articles, but absolutely a contrary system? In case, by any "after-lights, a clergyman finds cause to change his subscribing "opinion (a right I shall not dispute), and goes into different "schemes, why is not such disagreement with his rule publicly "acknowledged, and the people advertised of the difference? "This mystery of the pulpit appears to me unfair with respect "to the people. They have no fixed sight of their minister's "scheme. They can have no *security*, no *dependance* upon "him, in any doctrinal point whatsoever." Page 2, 3.

lieved,



lieved, or pretended to believe, the protestations of the church, against the matter of fact, we meet with nothing in their respective systems of latitude, which hath not already been obviated. And, the matter of fact being so plain and indisputable, it is to little purpose to argue the point of *right*, upon the original Protestant principle; as if that principle was still allowed to have its uncontrouled operation in the matter of subscription to the Articles. We frankly allow that every Protestant, as such, has a right to deny his assent to, or approbation of, any doctrine, which he himself conceives to be contrary to the scriptures. But the moment he sits down to subscribe the xxxix Articles, circumstanced and conditioned as that subscription now is, he sits down to sign away this right (as much as in him lies), and to transfer it to the church. The church, indeed, does not in so many words require him to subscribe to any thing which is *contrary* or even *disagreeable* to the scripture. But the church, by obtaining that subscription from him, takes the interpretation of scripture out of his hands. It is the church, and the church only, that *finds therein*, and *proves thereby*, the propositions to be subscribed. And if a man should after that pretend to interpose his own judgment in contradiction to the church's *findings* and *proving*, the church, with the help of the state, would

soon shew him his mistake; by virtue of that *Alliance*, the original instrument of which hath been so happily discovered and commented upon by a great Genius of our own times. The church of *England*: "tells mankind indeed, they shall judge for themselves. But if they who take her word, do not think and judge as she does, they shall suffer for it, and be turned out of the house." To prove the EQUITY of which proceeding (EQUITY and UTILITY, in this author's idea, being the same thing) is the laudable purpose of this famous new-found ALLIANCE.

There is yet one writer behind, who hath offered a plea for liberty and latitude in subscribing the Articles, of a different complexion from the rest. The writer I mean is Dr. *Clayton*, the late worthy Bishop of *Clogher* in *Ireland*, and author of the *Essay on Spirit*, who, in his Dedication of that learned work, hath taken this matter of *subscription* into particular consideration.

Bishop *Conybeare* had observed, in his sermon on the *Case of Subscription*, that the xxxix Articles are not to be considered as Articles of Peace, but of Doctrine, as the very title denotes, which is, *for avoiding diversities of opinions, and for establishing consent touching true religion*. And from this circumstance his Lordship inferred, and very justly, "that every man's subscription amounts to an approbation of, and an assent to, the truth of

“ of the doctrine therein contained, in the very  
“ sense in which the compilers thereof are sup-  
“ posed to have understood them.”

Now, the right reverend Essayist tells us his  
case was this: “ Being a clergyman, he had sub-  
“ scribed the Articles pretty early in life, and  
“ probably in the sense in which the compilers  
“ understood them. But, finding reasons after-  
“ wards to disagree with his former opinions, he  
“ laboured under some difficulties how to direct  
“ himself in these circumstances.”

Had Bishop *Conybeare* been consulted upon  
these difficulties, there is little doubt but he  
would have answered, that this change of opi-  
nions in the Essayist was virtually disclaiming his  
subscription, which let him into his function;  
and, as he now no longer complied with the con-  
ditions required by the church of all her ministers,  
an obligation seemed to lay upon him to resign  
his preferments in the church.

To avoid this consequence, Bishop *Clayton* was  
inclined to consider these Articles not as Articles  
of doctrine, but as Articles of peace. “ As I ap-  
“ prehend,” says he, “ that the church of *Ireland*  
“ does not set up for infallibility, I do not think  
“ she requireth any other kind of subscription  
“ than such as is necessary for peace-sake.”

What the laws of subscription are in *Ireland*  
I know not; but if his Lordship formed his  
judgment only on the circumstance of the church

of *Ireland's* disclaiming infallibility, I fancy the case may be much the same there, as in our own country; where, though we are not *infallible*, we are *always in the right*. His *apprehensions*, therefore, of ecclesiastical moderation, in the one country or the other, will go but a little way towards settling the debatable point between the Essayist and Bishop *Conybeare*, which, resting upon a matter of fact, must be determined by suitable evidence.

"I apprehend," says Dr. *Clayton*, "any attempt towards avoiding diversity of opinion, not only to be an useless, but an impracticable scheme." In which I entirely agree with him. But what then? It actually was the attempt of our first Reformers, and is still the scheme of the churches of *England and Ireland*.

"I do not only doubt," continues he, "whether the compilers of the Articles, but even whether any two *thinking men*, ever agreed exactly in their opinion, not only with regard to all the Articles, but even with regard to any one of them."

The presumptive proof is very strong, that *Cranmer* was the sole compiler of *K. Edward's* Articles. The alterations and corrections of 1562, are well known to be in *Parker's* hand, who, though he might make a shew of consulting his brethren, most probably gave them to understand at the same time, that the Articles were



were to pass as they were then settled. *Thinkers* in those days, any more than in our own, were not very common; and perhaps not half a dozen of those to whom they were communicated, or who subscribed them, considered how far they differed from each other, or suspected that they differed at all. They received them implicitly, as hundreds do to this hour; and, consequently, in the sense of the compiler or compilers. They transmitted them to posterity just as they received them; and just so were they bound upon posterity by law. The inutility, therefore, and the impracticability of an uniformity of opinion, where men are disposed to think for themselves, is indeed an unanswerable argument why such Articles *should never* be imposed, but will afford no proof that our xxxix Articles *are not* imposed with this particular view.

But, though the right reverend Author of the *Essay* thinks thus of our Articles, and of the subscribers to them, he seems to think it expedient that there should be some such system of doctrines, not indeed as a test of *opinions*, but of *profession*. I say, he *seems* to think so. But let the reader judge from his own words.

\* The *Irish* Articles were different from those of the church of England, till the year 1634, "when, by the power of the Lord Deputy *Wentworth*, and the dexterity of Bishop *Bramhal*, the Irish articles were repealed in a full convocation, "and those of *England* authorized in the place thereof." *Heylin's History of the Presbyterians*, p. 395.

"An uniformity of profession," says he, "may indeed be both practicable and useful; and seems, in some degree, to be necessary, not only for the preservation of peace, but also for the general good and welfare of society."

His Lordship must mean, an *uniformity* of profession with respect to those things, concerning which the belief or persuasion of the several professors may be *different* and *multiform*. Otherwise the proposition is not of sufficient importance to require, or indeed to deserve, a formal argument to support it. For who ever doubted but that, in matters of religion, a man both usefully may and reasonably ought to profess what he believes?

By religion I mean the Christian religion. But to believe one thing, and to profess another, the Christian religion calls *hypocrisy*, and under that name severely censures and condemns it. Hypocrisy, indeed, may serve the turn of a particular *class* of men in society, who have views and interests distinct from the general good and welfare of the whole. But how this grand enemy to truth and virtue should contribute either to the peace of, or be otherwise useful or wholesome to, society in general, is a mystery that will require some elucidation.

"I do not conceive," says this ingenious Prelate, "how any society or commonwealth can subsist, unless some form of religion or other

be

\* be established therein, as well with regard to  
 "doctrine as discipline; which [points of doc-  
 "trine] however ought to be as plain, few, and  
 "fundamental as possible."

Forms of discipline are not, indeed, now at  
 issue; but are however necessary to be taken in-  
 to the account. And as St. Paul thought, that  
 men might *lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all*  
*godliness and honesty*, under proper subjection  
 to, and coercion of, the *civil* magistrate, I do not  
 see that I should be ashamed to think so too.  
 And this point being settled, how the subsistence  
 of any society or republic should depend upon  
 the establishment of *doctrinal* forms of religion,  
 is just as difficult for me to conceive, as it was to  
 the learned Prelate to conceive the contrary\*.

\* "With regard to the safety of the government from  
 "persons disapproving the communion of the church, that  
 "point the Prince only has to do with, and the Legislature.  
 "In case a test can be found, of a secular kind, adequate to  
 "that purpose, as certainly there may, to draw religious con-  
 "troversies into the question, is altogether foreign. This lat-  
 "ter makes the *safety* proposed by it (if I am not mistaken)  
 "not so properly the safety of the Prince or Monarchy (*one*  
 "*may add likewise*, of the state), as the *safety* of the Clergy and  
 "Hierarchy, in their authority and acquisitions. Otherwise  
 "the oath of Supremacy and Allegiance would be sufficient.  
 "It is the only test the occasion naturally calls for." SEA-  
 GRAVE'S *Observations on the Conduct of the Clergy in relation to*  
*the thirty-nine Articles*, p. 45. 46.

That

That his Lordship meant some *human* form of religion, is evident from his adding, that *the points of doctrine in such form, should be as plain, few, and fundamental as possible.* But, for my part, I cannot see why establishing the scriptures should not answer all the ends of civil society, *in this respect*, as well as any other forms. When you have made a proper provision for the *external* deportment of men, as subjects to the state, by a wholesome and righteous civil institute, it remains only that their religious manners, sentiments, and dispositions should be formed by the rules, precepts, and doctrines of the word of God. But this, being a matter rather of *personal* than of *public* concern, must be left to the men themselves, if we would have the work done with its proper influence and effect. Whatever appearances of sanctity, devotion, and Christian virtue, external forms and ordinances may produce in public, it is but so much hypocrisy, if a real principle of religion is not in the hearts of the several individuals; and how this principle should be planted in the heart, rather by *human* forms; than by the genuine scriptures, no mortal can tell. From what I have seen of human forms, I will venture to say, that points of Christian doctrine *cannot* be made *plainer* in them, than they are already in the scriptures; and *fewer* or *less fundamental* they *ought not* to be made.

But, to come a little nearer the point in hand: The Bishop doubts, as we have seen, "whether  
 " any



"any two thinking men ever agreed exactly in opinion with regard to any *one* of our xxxix "Articles." And he who doubts this can hardly suppose that any form of doctrine can be drawn up in human language, consisting of points so plain, few, and fundamental, as that all, or even a majority, of those for whose use they are intended, shall perfectly agree in them. The Bishop will say, there is no occasion they should; because *uniformity of profession* is all that he wants to have established. But, if so, why will not our present Articles, why indeed will not the Articles of *Trent*, do as well as any other for the purpose? He that professes to believe points of doctrine which he does not believe, be they ever so *plain, few, or fundamental*, in the apprehension of the establishers, is just as much an hypocrite, as if such forms were stuffed with ever so many impertinencies, or even falsties.

The use of religion to society, I apprehend to be, that men, having in their hearts the fear of God and of his judgments, may be restrained from evil, and encouraged to be virtuous, in such instances as are beyond the reach of human laws. Points of doctrine, therefore, established for the public good of society, must have this *use of religion* for their object. But if a man *disbelieves* in his *heart*, what he *professes* with his tongue or with his pen, religion, as such, has no hold of him.

him in that instance, and society has no more benefit from his *profession*, than if such points of doctrine had not been established.

Again. To make uniformity of religious profession necessary, in *any* degree, for the subsistence of the commonwealth, it must be necessary that the points to be professed, be established upon *exclusive* conditions. And this extending, in our author's plan, both to doctrine and discipline, will leave no room for dissenters in either. For every dissenter breaks in upon the scheme of uniformity, and consequently on the peace and welfare which this uniformity is intended to maintain. This, at once, demolishes all those systems of Government, which tolerate doctrines and disciplines, contrary to the established forms. Whereas, experience has taught us, that those commonwealths have always been either the freest from religious feuds, or the least incommoded by them, which have tolerated different sects with the greatest latitude, and appropriated the fewest emoluments to *one*.

If the question should be asked, why a commonwealth, or a state, cannot subsist in peace and welfare without some established form of religion? the answer to be expected from his Lordship would be, that except men were uniform in their profession of religion, there could be nothing in a state but discord and confusion. And yet his Lordship says, "if men were not to speak  
" their

"their minds in spite of establishments (that is  
 "to say, *openly profess things contrary to establish-*  
*ments*), truth would soon be banished from  
 "the earth."

Does not this plainly imply, that establishments banish truth from the earth, in the same proportion as they answer the ends of peace and welfare to the civil community? Or, how could worse evils result from mens speaking their minds, when they were under no restraints from establishments, than now, that they take that liberty *in spite* of them?

The Defender of the *Essay on spirit* is displeased with somebody for suggesting that his client ought to have been against all religious establishments, which however is true enough, if these abovementioned are the effects of them. True Religion never can subsist, whatever may become of civil communities, upon the basis of hypocrisy; or where men are *obliged to profess* one thing, and *allowed to believe* another. And if the rule of true religion be taken from the Christian scriptures, the temporal peace and safety of any Christian, in civil society, is but a secondary consideration, to the obligation he is under to hold fast his integrity, in *truth* and *sincerity*.

The reason given, why human establishments with regard to religion are necessary, is, "that  
 "the welfare and support of society is so founded,  
 "by the great *Author of Nature*, on the basis of  
 "religion,

"religion, that it is impossible to separate the  
 "one from the other; and, of consequence, the  
 "establishment of the one will necessarily re-  
 "quire the establishment of the other."

The meaning of which, at the bottom, is only this, that human laws reach the exigencies of civil society so imperfectly, that, unless the influence of religion is connected with them, the welfare and peace of civil society cannot be supported. Which, I apprehend, no body will deny.

But then, as this plan of civil Government is delineated by the great *Author of Nature*, it will be necessary to take *his* directions in the execution of it; if any such directions may be come at. And if no such directions are to be found, it is doubtful, whether the plan itself, authorized by the great *Author of Nature*, may be found.

The sophism here turns upon the word *establishment*. Religion may be said to be *established*, when it is received and professed by individuals, upon the sole authority of divine revelation. Civil society can only be established by human Laws and ordinances, at least as this author conceives, and as, for the present, I am willing to grant. If then the establishment of religion by *divine revelation* is sufficient to answer the purposes of civil society, the purposes of the great *Author of Nature*, in creating this connection, are answered at



the same time; and with any farther establishment of religion, human laws have nothing to do. Whether they have or not? is the question. And hereupon, the writer of the *Letter to the Bishop of Clogher*, very pertinently asks, *Who is the judge?* That is to say, who is the judge, how far it may be necessary to establish religion by human laws?

To this the Defender answers without hesitation, "The same legislative powers, which establish the one, have a right to establish the other; and to chuse that religion which they think to be best."

Where it must be supposed, that the great *Author of Nature* hath left it as free for Magistrates, and Legislators, to establish by human Laws, what doctrines or modes of religion they chuse, or find expedient for secular utility; as it is for them to chuse what modes of civil society they find convenient. Which indeed is to suppose, that there never was any *authentic* revelation of true religion in the world. For as surely as God has revealed true religion, so surely has he inhibited Magistrates, and all others, from establishing any thing *contrary* to it, or *deviating* from it.

But by what is said in the *Dedication* prefixed to the *Essay on spirit*, the *Defender*, most likely, would confine this *right* of the legislative powers,

\* Defence of the *Essay on spirit*, p. 3,

## 242 THE CONFSSIONAL

to the enforcing of an *Uniformity of Profession* only.

But it has been shewn above, that in this view, the establishment of religion will afford no aid to civil laws; in as much as he who professes one thing, and believes another, will derive none of that influence from his *profession*, which is necessary to supply the unavoidable defects of civil ordinances. Not to mention, that if the great *Author of Nature* founded the welfare and support of society, on no surer basis of religion than this, it hardly seems worthy of his infinite wisdom to have interposed in this matter at all.

But indeed, both the wisdom and goodness of our benevolent Creator are most ungraciously misrepresented by this author. Upon his principles, whatever right Christian Legislators have to establish *what religion they chuse for the best*, the same had the Pagan Legislators. Suppose these then to have extended their establishment no farther than to an *uniformity of Profession*, what were St. Paul's converts to do? were they to comply with the modes of the times, and *profess* themselves idolaters? This the Apostle prohibits in express terms; and herein ventures to counteract this right of the civil legislative powers. And no doubt upon good authority.

When we apply this theory of religious establishments to our own circumstances, the case will stand thus. Our legislative powers have a  
right

right to establish human forms of religion, so far at least as to require uniformity of profession. This right they have exercised, and this right they have from the great *Author of Nature*. The consequence is, that all Dissenters from these established forms, that is, all who disclaim the *profession*, as well as the *belief* of them, are not only offenders against civil peace and order, but wicked opposers of the authority of God himself. This indeed has been charged upon them by our zealous church-memorialists with all freedom. The civil powers have however granted them a *toleration*, which we may be sure they would not have done, unless they had entertained more qualified sentiments concerning *their own* rights; as well as more accurate conceptions of the welfare and support of society, than this Defender of the *Essay on Spirit* exhibits.

But to conclude this chapter. There is one particular weakness and want of forecast, common to all these pleaders for latitude. If you take their several schemes, as they are founded upon the church's declarations, nothing can be more righteous or reasonable than to comply with the terms prescribed by the church; and then, *perfectly consistent is the reasonableness of conformity, with the rights of private judgment*. But go back to their principles of Christian Liberty, on which they oppose the Advocates for Church-authority, and you will find there is no-

R

thing

244 THE CONFESSIONAL

thing more inconsistent with those principles, than the Authority which the church of *England* actually claims and exercises.

The high Churchmen, *Rogers, Stebbing, Hare, Waterland, Potter, Snape*, and their retainers, claim no privileges for the Church of *England*, which she does not actually enjoy, nor any powers which she does not actually exercise. Their proofs are accordingly directed to shew, that she *rightly* enjoys and exercises these privileges and powers.

When therefore their opponents had shewn, that the church had no such privileges or powers of *right*; consistency required that they should have withdrawn from a church, which usurped an authority that did not belong to her, and to have born their testimony against her in DEEDS, as well as WORDS.



## C H A P. VII.

*An attempt to discover whence the practice of subscribing the xxxix Articles in different senses, was derived; and by what sort of casuists, and what sort of reasoning, it was first propagated, and has been since espoused.*

IT is a fact in which our historical writers of all parties agree, that, during the reign of Queen *Elizabeth*, and for some part of the reign of King *James I.* there was no difference between the episcopal churchmen and the puritans, in matters of *doctrine*. The Contests between the Bishops and the Puritans of those times concerning subscription, arose from those articles which asserted the powers of an episcopal Hierarchy, and an authority to prescribe and injoin rites and ceremonies. To these forms of Church-Government the Puritans had, as they thought, unanswerable objections; and therefore would never subscribe those articles, which approved them, without exceptions and limitations.

The Parliament of 1572, seems to have thought these objections of the Puritans reasonable; and accordingly in the Act of that year, injoining subscription, those Articles are required to be subscribed, which *only concern the confession of the true faith, and the sacraments*. And when Archbishop *Parker* took upon him to expostulate with some members of the House of Commons, for leaving

## 246 THE CONFESSIONAL

out *the rest*, he was answered, "that they were  
"not satisfied concerning their agreement with  
"the Word of God <sup>a</sup>."

The Bishops, however, who were the persons appointed by law, to take the security of subscription from the candidates for the ministry, artfully found the means of evading this moderation of the Parliament, by making certain canons, in consequence of which, subscription was exacted to *all* the Articles without exception. These canons are to be found in *Sparrow's* collection, under the title of *Liber quorundam canonum, anno 1571* <sup>b</sup>.

The Queen, it seems, (for what reason does not appear) could not be prevailed with to ratify these canons in form; and they were framed likewise, and made public, without the *royal license*, requisite in such cases. They had, however, her Ma-

<sup>a</sup> *Strype's Life of Parker*, p. 394. See also *Selden's Table-talk*.

<sup>b</sup> That is, according to the ecclesiastical computation; but they were not published till after the act was past. In the first of these Canons, subscription is enjoined in these words, *ita tamen ut subscribant articulis Christianæ religionis, publice in synodo approbatis, fidemque dent, se velle tueri et defendere Doctrinam eam, quæ in illis continetur, ut consentientissimam veritati verbi divini*; which seems to be much the same with the subscription enjoined by the Act. But under the title, *Concionatores*, the Candidate is to confirm, by his subscription, *the Book of Common prayer, and the Book of Ordination, &c.* And upon this injunction were modelled four articles, called in those days, *The Bishop's Articles*, the three first of which were much the same with those in our 36th Canon.

jeſty's *verbal* approbation, or rather perhaps her *connivance*; with which, by the way, *Grindal*, then Archbishop of *York*, was by no means ſatisfied, and, very probably, never ventured to carry them into execution within his own Dioceſe <sup>e</sup>.

The Puritans oppoſed *this* ſubſcription with all their might. None of them, that I can find, reſuſed to ſubſcribe according to Act of Parliament; that is to ſay, to ſubſcribe the *doctrinal* and *ſacramental* articles. They, among them, who ſubſcribed them *all*, never omitted to make ſome exception, or proteſtation, with reſpect to the articles which concerned church-government or diſcipline. Where this was not allowed, they reſuſed to ſubſcribe at all, and choſe rather to undergo what the Biſhops *thought fit* to inflict upon them. I ſay *thought fit*; for, certain it is, that the ſaid Biſhops, had *then* no legal authority to ſilence, imprifon, or deprive, as they did, great numbers of thoſe who reſuſed to ſubſcribe *their* articles.

Theſe facts are ſufficiently proved by Mr. *Pierce*, in his *vindication of the Diſſenters*. For the preſent, however, I chuſe to appeal to a teſtimony leſs exceptionable to churchmen, I mean *Thomas Rogers*, in the dedication of his expoſition of the xxxix Articles to Archbishop *Bancroft*, published 1607. Where, though he extolls the Biſhops, and reviles the Puritans with the moſt ab-

<sup>e</sup> See *Strype's Life of Parker*, p. 322.

## 248 THE CONFESSIONAL.

jest sycophantry, he hath nevertheless represented the matter so, as to shew, with sufficient perspicuity, that the Puritans might, with great truth and propriety, have said to *Elizabeth*, what the Hebrew officers pleaded to *Pharaoh*, *Exod. v. 16. Behold thy servants are beaten, but the fault is in thine own people.*

Upon the accession of *James*, things went on pretty much in the same way, till after the *Hampton-Court-Conference*, and the publication of the *Canons of 1604*. When, as we are informed by *Rogers*, certain of the brethren, meaning the Puritans, refused to subscribe, not only to the Hierarchical Articles, but to the rest likewise, "because the purpose or intention of the church, if not her doctrine, were somewhat varied [from what they were in time of *Queen Elizabeth*], in proof of which they alledged the late book of *Canons*, the book of *Conference*, (meaning *Bishop Barlow's* account of the *Conference at Hampton-Court*) and some speeches of men in great place, and others <sup>d</sup>."

I do not remember to have seen any mention made of this scruple of the Puritans, in any other history or account of those times; and as it is the first instance of their refusing to subscribe the doctrinal articles of the church, it may be worth the while to look a little farther into it, and to find out, if we can, the nature and cause of this new scruple.

<sup>d</sup> See *Rogers's* Dedication, Sect. 34, 35.



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 249

*Rogers* wisely says nothing to the particulars of this objection; that is, nothing of the *Canons*, or the passages in the *book of conference*, which had given offence. He was writing a fulsome dedication to *Bancroft*, the father of all this new mischief. To have entered into the merits of the complaint, might have disturbed his patron. We are obliged to him indeed, that he would mention this matter at all; and cannot but do him the justice to acknowledge, that he hath acquitted himself of the difficulty upon his hands by a very dextrous quibble; *viz.* "that the words of the articles being still the same, the doctrine, purpose, and intention of the church must be the same likewise." And if the Puritans would not be imposed on by this sophism, it was none of his fault.

But to come to the point. The regal supremacy, as extended to ecclesiastical matters, and especially in the hands of a woman, was an eye-sore from the beginning to the Puritans, as well as to the Papists. This obliged *Parker*, in reviewing *Edward's* Articles in 1562, to add a pretty long explanation, to the article concerning the *Civil Magistrate*, importing, "that the ministring either of God's word, or of the sacraments, were not given to our Prince, — but only that prerogative which we see to have been given always, to all godly Princes in the holy scriptures, by God himself;" meaning the godly Princes of *Judah* and *Israel*. Art. 37.

With this explanation the Puritans had reason to be (and probably were) satisfied. When the Kings of *Israel* and *Judah* interfered with the sacred office of the Priesthood, farther than they were warranted by the law of *Moses*, they ceased to be *godly* Princes; and so long as our own Princes kept themselves within the like bounds, their supremacy was liable to no abuse. Should it prove otherwise, the Puritans had no objection to the doctrine of resistance; or the lawfulness of transferring dominion from *ungodly* Princes to the *pious* and *elect*.

But these doctrines *James* could by no means relish. He knew not in what light he might stand with his people in process of time. If in the light of a *reprobate*, here was a door left open for transferring his crown to a better man.

*Bancroft* therefore took care to salve this matter in the canon which enjoined subscription, by adding to the authority of the godly Kings in scripture, that of the *Christian Emperors* in the primitive church, *godly* or *ungodly*; and at the same time vesting *James* with the supremacy in ALL causes ecclesiastical and civil \*.

\* See Canon ii. xxxvi. and lv. The Article to be subscribed to, concerning the Queen's [*Elizabeth's*] supremacy, in the injunction appealed to in our thirty-seventh Article, was thus worded: "The Queen's Majesty is the chief Governour, next under Christ, of this church of *England*, as well in ecclesiastical as civil causes." Which may be compared with the first of the three Articles, enjoined to be subscribed by our thirty-sixth Canon.

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 251

This alteration put matters upon a very different footing, and made no small variation in the doctrine of the church. It is but dipping into the imperial law, wherever it opens at an ecclesiastical case, to be convinced, that the *Christian* Emperors far outstripped the Jewish Kings, in the powers they claimed and exercised over the church<sup>f</sup>. But,

2. The passage in *the Book of Conference*, which gave offence, was chiefly this. In the sixteenth Article of our church it is said, that *after we have received the Holy Ghost we may fall from grace*. Dr. Reynolds imagined this might seem to cross the doctrine of *Predestination*, unless some such words were added as, *yet neither totally, nor finally*, which he desired might be done by way of explanation. He likewise desired that the nine *Lambeth* Articles, drawn up by *Whitgift*, might be inserted in the book of Articles.

Dr. Bancroft was highly provoked at this, and observed, "that very many in those days, neglecting holiness of life, presumed too much on  
" persisting in grace; laying all their religion on  
" *Predestination*; *if I shall be saved, I shall be*  
" *saved*: which he termed a *desperate* doctrine,  
" shewing it to be contrary to good divinity, and  
" the true doctrine of *Predestination*; wherein we

<sup>f</sup> They who choose not to turn over voluminous codes of the imperial law, may find what is here advanced tolerably well made out in Father *Paul's* History of Beneficiary Matters.

" should

" should rather reason *ascendendo*, than *descendendo*, thus, *I live in obedience to God, in love with my neighbour; I follow my vocation, &c. therefore I trust God hath elected me, and predestinated me to salvation.* Not thus, which is the usual course of argument, *God hath predestinated me to life; therefore, though I sin never so grievously, yet I shall not be damned; for whom he loveth, he loveth to the end.* Whereupon, he shewed his Majesty, out of the next Article, what was the doctrine of the church of *England* touching Predestination, in the very last paragraph; namely, we must receive God's promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in the holy scriptures; and, in our doings, *that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God &c.*"

The Bishop was much in the right, to shew his Majesty only the *very last paragraph* of the seventeenth Article. Had he turned the King's attention to the foregoing paragraphs, his Majesty would have seen, that his learned harangue was rank *Arminianism*, and a flat contradiction to the said Article; which actually argues, as the Bishop termed it, *descendendo*; inferring *the walking religiously in good works, and attaining to everlasting felicity, from previous predestination* <sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> *Phoenix*, vol. I. p. 151.

<sup>b</sup> A certain pamphleteer, having objected to the *English Clergy*, that they subscribed Articles which they did not believe; When



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 253

When it came to the royal moderator's turn to determine this matter between the two parties, he contented himself with shuffling it off as well as he could. He chose not to disoblige the Bishops; and yet in his own opinions was a rigid Calvinist, at this period at least. But however, as he began with *approving very well* what *Bancroft* shewed him in the last paragraph of the Article, it is probable that this, and his refusing to admit the *Lambeth* Articles into the public confession, might be among the *speeches of some great ones*, from which the Puritans concluded, that the *purpose and intention*, if not the *doctrine* of the church, had varied from what it had been.

Dr. George Fothergill of Oxford undertook their defence in the postscript or appendix to a *Fast-sermon* preached before that university, *February 17, 1758*. His aim is to shew, that the Articles are not Calvinistical; and one of his arguments is the "non-acquiescence of the Calvinists in the present set of Articles, and their repeated attempts either to get them worded more strictly, or to have others superadded more determinate in their favour." It is plain he had this motion of Dr. Reynolds in his eye, and probably took the hint from *Heylin* and *Montague*, whom he refers to, without knowing, or perhaps caring to know, how these writers had been refuted by *Carlton*, *Hickman*, and others. It appears, however, that the seventeenth Article asserts Calvinistical Predestination *descendendo* in positive terms, and is so far, according to *Bancroft*, false divinity. And, if the very last paragraph is *Arminian*, what will Dr. Fothergill get by shewing that he and his brethren subscribe *ex animo* to contradictions?

And

## 254 THE CONFSSIONAL

And let me remark, that these same Puritans, in refusing to subscribe the *doctrinal* Articles, when they saw this inclination in the Bishops to put a new construction upon them, seem to have understood the nature of the case much better than our modern subscribers. What the Bishops *then* aimed at (and what their successors have *since* accomplished), was to bring men to a simple implicit subscription, without any reserve or limitation whatever. The Puritans had all along subscribed the Articles with various protests and exceptions against those which related to *discipline*. And these exceptions the Bishops, in some cases at least, admitted. The *doctrinal* Articles were subscribed by all parties without reserve; because the opinions of all parties were tolerably uniform with respect to the subject-matter of them. But now the case was altered. This *variation* in the purpose and intention of the church, made it unsafe for the Puritans to subscribe the *doctrinal* Articles implicitly, or without reserve. They did not think, as the generality of subscribers seem to think now, that they might be allowed to abound in their own sense, in what form soever they subscribed. They were wiser. They knew that the Bishops, taking upon them to interpret the Articles, in the manner *Bancroft* had done at the Conference, would put what construction they pleased upon their subscription, against which they had found by experience, all their subsequent *monstrances* would signify nothing. They knew,  
in

in short, the Bishops had suppressed the protestations they had made with respect to the disciplinary Articles, and proceeded against them as *revolters*, and as though they had subscribed *all* the Articles *implicitly*. And therefore they wisely avoided the snare, and kept themselves out of their power <sup>i</sup>.

It does not appear, however, that Archbishop *Bancroft* made any farther attempt to introduce Arminianism into the church. And one pretty clear proof that he did not, is that he authorised *Rogers's Exposition* in the year 1607; which, as a very competent judge observes, went upon the *Calvinistical frame* <sup>k</sup>. The reason, probably, was, that he found the King not sufficiently pliable to come into his notions. Doctrinal matters, therefore, continued still upon the old foundation, notwithstanding the suspicions of the Puritans, till *Bancroft's* death, which happened in the year 1610.

He was succeeded by *George Abbot*, a man of a very different character in all respects.

The next year, 1611, happened the ruffle between *James I.* and the States of *Holland*, concerning *Vorstius*, who was called by the University of *Leyden* to succeed *Arminius*, as their Divinity-professor. The King's remonstrances against

<sup>i</sup> See *Pierce's Vindication*, p. 109, 110.

<sup>k</sup> *Hickman's Animadversions on Heylin's Quinq. Hist.* p. 218.

## 256 THE CONFESSIONAL.

this promotion proving ineffectual, his Majesty thought proper to attempt the confutation of *Vorstius's* book *de Deo*, in a formal controversial writing; in which he calls "*Arminius* a seditious and heretical preacher, an infector of *Leyden* with heresy, and an enemy of God; and withal, he complains of his hard hap, not to hear of him before he was dead; and that all the Reformed churches in *Germany* had with open mouth complained of him<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> See *Harris's* Hist. and Critical Account of the Life and Writings of *James I.* p. 124. Dr. *Harris* says, "*James* is said to have been excited to declare against *Vorstius* by *Abbot*, Archbishop of *Canterbury*; and it is not unlikely. Most of the ecclesiastics of that time abounded with a fiery zeal, which frequently hurried them into actions not to be justified." p. 119.—This information comes, it seems, from *La Roche*, Abridgment, vol. I. p. 318. but, I apprehend, without the least good authority. *Fuller* says not a word of *Abbot's* being concerned in this matter. And *Heylin* makes no remark upon his silence, which, attached as he was to the opinions of *Vorstius*, and rancorously disaffected to *Abbot*, he would certainly have done, had he known of any just grounds for the story. *Heylin* himself says indeed (having just mentioned the King's declaration against *Vorstius*, and his Majesty's animosity against the Remonstrants)—"Some think, he [*James*] was drawn unto it by the powerful persuasions of Archbishop *Abbot* and Bishop *Montagus*, who then much governed his counsels in all church-concernments." Hist. Press. p. 402. But, besides that this relates to the King's general disposition towards the Remonstrants, he immediately subjoins three other conjectures, and adopts the last as *most rational*, viz. reason of state. If Sir *Ralph Winwood* had mentioned the King's being instigated against *Vorstius* by *Abbot*, I take it for granted, Dr. *Harris* would have cited him, instead of *La Roche*. In the mean time, the

I cite



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 257

I cite this passage only to shew, that King James, at this period, was no friend to the *Arminians*.

compilers of *Abbot's* life, in the *Biographia Britannica*, tell us, that, "When it was found difficult to obtain from the States "that satisfaction [in the matter of *Vorsius*] which the King "desired, his Grace, in conjunction with the Lord Treasurer "Salisbury, framed an expedient for contenting both parties." And for this they cite *Winwood's* Memorials. This does not look like the *fiery zeal* of an *instigator*. Not to mention that *Abbot* was too wise and too good a man to approve of King James's weak and licentious manner of writing against *Vorsius*. That *Abbot* had no cordial affection for the *Arminians*, is very credible and very accountable, inasmuch as it was the universal opinion of the wisest and best of men in those times, that *Arminianism* was a back-door to Popery; and certain events in our own country have not at all contributed to discredit that opinion, as I observe below. The Archbishop's disaffection to *Grotius* was owing to the endeavours and proposals of the latter towards a coalition of the Protestants and Papists, which every wise and consistent Protestant, in every period since the Reformation, as well as *Abbot*, has considered as a *snare*, and treated accordingly. In the famous letter of *Abbot's* against *Grotius*, preserved in *Winwood*, the worst part of that great man's character is taken from the report of others, and might make the worse impressions upon the Archbishop's mind, as his Grace was aware of the pernicious tendency of *Grotius's* negotiations with James and his *Arminianizing* prelates, particularly by his joining with the latter in advancing maxims in favour of arbitrary power. For the rest, there never was a prelate freer from the fiery zeal of an ecclesiastic, perhaps hardly ever a private clergyman, than *George Abbot*. It was reckoned his disgrace in the next reign, that he did not tread in the steps of the *fiery* Bancroft. "Had *Laud* succeeded *Bancroft*," said they, "and the "project of conformity been followed without interruption, the "ensuing schism might have been prevented." *Fuller's Wor-*

In

In the year 1613, *James*, indeed, seems to have had more qualified sentiments concerning the Arminian system. He tells the States, in a letter, dated *March 6th* that year, that, "having seen, in a letter sent to him by the *Sieur Caron*, their Ambassador, the opinions of both parties, and the arguments by which they are supported, discussed at large, it did not appear to him, that either of them were inconsistent with the truth of the Christian faith, and the salvation of souls." [*La Roche*, Abridgement, vol. I. p. 325.] *Dr. Harris* likewise quotes *Sir Ralph Winwood* for the same fact<sup>m</sup>.

The two Historians last cited, *Messieurs La Roche* and *Harris*, call this a contradiction in *James*; and a contradiction, the latter observes,

thies, *SURRY*, p. 83. — "He was slack and negligent," says the firebrand *Heylin*, "in the course of his government, and too indulgent to that party, which *Bancroft* had kept under with such just severity." *Hist. Presb.* p. 389. — If to this we add, the noble stand he made against the *Spanish* match; his unwearied endeavours and vigilance against popery; his spirited letter to *James I.* on that subject; and his not only refusing to license, but confuting the positions in *Sibthorp's* sermon; — these particulars, and his uniform adherence to the same principles during his whole life, oblige me to think, that *Mr. La Roche*, or rather perhaps *Brandt*, was misinformed with respect to *Abbot's* exciting *K. James* to declare against *Vorsius*; and that, taking the whole of that Archbishop's character together, no ecclesiastic of that time, and very few of any other time, have less abounded with a fiery unjustifiable zeal, than Archbishop *Abbot*.

<sup>m</sup> *Life of James I.* p. 124.

was nothing to him. But, I apprehend, the most inconstant man breathing, if he changes his mind ten times in a day, has some reason or motive for it, which operates *pro hac vice*.

The case appears to have been this. *Grotius* was very fond of a scheme he had projected and entertained, of uniting the Roman Catholics and Protestants, wherein he was for making concessions to the Papists, which the Protestants abroad would never come into. It appears by a letter of *Casaubon* to *Grotius*, which bears date *January 27, 1612-13*, that *Grotius* had sent some papers to *Casaubon* upon this subject, which the latter had communicated to *James*, who greatly approved them; and he tells *Grotius*, that "he had found many *English* Bishops, eminent for their piety and learning, who revolved in their minds night and day the same thoughts with himself." Which was to say, that these Bishops would have made the same concessions to the Papists, that *Grotius* contended for. That *James* was in the same way of thinking, is notorious from other documents: particularly his speech to his first parliament°. Probably he had not considered how far he must depart from the *Confession of Faith*, in which he had been educated, before the *healing measures* of *Grotius* could take place, till Monsieur *Caron* put into his hands

° *Casaubon's Epistles*, 655, Edit. *Brunswick*, 1556.

° See the speech in *Rapin Thoyras*, and that historian's remarks upon it.

the rescript he mentions in his letter to the States. At this time too the *Arminians* bid fair for being the triumphant party in the *Low Countries*; *Grotius* and *Barnevelt*, being employed by the States, to draw up the edict intended to restore tranquillity between the *Gomarists* and *Arminians* <sup>p</sup>, which edict was highly approved of by *James* and his Bishops <sup>q</sup>.

<sup>p</sup> *Burigni's* Life of *Grotius*, p. 47.

<sup>q</sup> *Casaubon's* Epist. 800. There is a pretty faithful translation of this Epistle in *La Roche's* Abridgment of *Brandt*, vol. I. p. 328. who omits no occasion of doing honour to the *Arminians* at the expence of their adversaries. In that Letter, *James* and his Bishops are said to approve and applaud the edict of the States, and it is insinuated that the Archbishop of *Canterbury* [*Abbot*] was one of them; which is incredible. For *Abbot*, as it is well known, disapproved and opposed *Grotius's* project of *re-union*, to which this edict was preparatory. *Casaubon* indeed, who was himself a notable trimmer, is not perfectly uniform in his several accounts of this matter. In his 777th Epistle, he tells *Grotius*, that the King was wonderfully pleased with the design of the States, and that all approved the *formulary* [the edict itself], except a few things, concerning which he had written to *Grotius* with that freedom which his fidelity required. But the Epistle, where this freedom is used, does not appear. In his 795th Epistle, which seems to have been written before the last mentioned, and immediately upon his receiving the edict from *Grotius*, he says, that "upon opening the packet, he immediately read the edict, and noted one or two things in it, which he would have wished had been otherwise expressed, but that he would wait till he knew the judgments of others upon it, and would then give *Grotius* an account both of his own opinion and of the opinions of others;" meaning, no doubt, of the King and the Bishops. This account we have in the 800th Epistle above-cited; and

With



With these impressions upon his mind, *James* wrote the abovementioned letter to the States.

In the interval between this time and the assembling of the synod of *Dort*, our histories afford no interesting accounts of King *James's* theological sentiments. *Casaubon*, in one of his letters to *Grotius*, then in *England*, tells him, that the Bishop of *Bath* and *Wells* was never from the King's side<sup>r</sup>. And that the *Arminian* clergy were not wanting, in improving their confidence with the King, appears from the following passage: "It was insinuated to the King, what dangers would proceed by training up of young students in the

there he says, that the King, and other most considerable men, approved, not only the design, but the *formulary* likewise. *Burigni*, in his *Life of Grotius*, p. 49, says, "The only thing which gave the King some pain, was to see the civil magistrate assume a right of making decrees in matters of religion;" and for this he cites *Casaubon*, *Epist.* 863. which is not in the edition I use. This objection, however, plainly lyes against the whole tenor of the edict, and we are still at a loss for the *exceptionable passages* of which *Casaubon* apprized *Grotius* with so much freedom. At length it turns out, "that the King, the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, and the Bishops of *England*, allowed the doctrine of the edict to be orthodox, and equally distant from *Manicheism* and *Pelagianism*." *Burigni*, *ibid.* Which was probably all the allowance it had from the Archbishop. If *Abbot* otherwise approved of an edict so favourable to the *Arminians*, as *Burigni* says this was, and which was so offensive to the *Contra-remonstrants*, how shall we reconcile this to what *Mr. La Roche* tells us, viz. "Some Reformed [*i. e.* *Contra-remonstrants*] brought the Archbishop into the quarrel against *Vorsinus*?"

<sup>r</sup> *Epist.* 745.

“grounds of *Calvinism*; — that there was no  
 “readier way to advance the presbyterial Go-  
 “vernment in this Kingdom, than by suffering  
 “young scholars to be seasoned with *Calvinian*  
 “doctrines: that it was very hard to say, whe-  
 “ther of the two, either the Puritan or the Pa-  
 “pist, were more destructive of Monarchical Go-  
 “vernment<sup>1</sup>.”

This was touching *James* in a tender part, and procured some injunctions to be sent to *Oxford*, concerning subscription to the three Articles in the 36th Canon, concerning the method of study, and some other regulations relative to the demeanour of scholars, and their school-exercises<sup>2</sup>; but nothing to the disparagement of doctrinal Calvinism, answerable to the expectations of the insinulators.

For by this time, matters had taken a very different turn in *Holland*. Some cities did not approve the edict abovementioned. The Prince of *Orange* had declared against the *Arminians*, and had a large majority both of the magistrates and divines on his side. And the common cry was, to have these disputes settled in a national synod. These things (which may be seen in *La Roche*, and other Histories) could not fail of making impressions upon *James*, and would restrain him from declaring in favour of *Arminianism*, to

<sup>1</sup> *Heylin's Life of Laud*, p. 71. *sub anno* 1616.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.

which

which he was, most probably, averse in his heart <sup>u</sup>.

Accordingly, he chose six Divines to assist at the Synod of *Dort*, who were well known to be zealous *Calvinists*. These, among other things, had it in their instructions, "to advise those Churches to use no innovation in doctrine, to teach the same things which were taught twenty or thirty years past in their own churches—and nothing which contradicted their own Confessions—to consult, at all times, his Majesty's Ambassador [Sir *Dudley Carleton*], who, says the King, understandeth well the questions and differences among them <sup>w</sup>."

These Divines concurred with the Synod in approving and ratifying the *Belgic* Confession <sup>x</sup>, and consequently in condemning the Remonstrants; and when they returned home, were received by *James* with approbation, and courteous entertainment. Three of these he afterwards preferred to Bishopricks, viz. *Hall*, *Carleton*, and

<sup>u</sup> Dr. *Featly*, according to Mr. *Hickman*, affirmed, that King *James*, not many weeks before his death, called the *Arminians* Heretics. *Animadversions*, 2d Edit. p. 231.

<sup>w</sup> "Grotius," says Mr. *La Roche*, "found out [while he was in England] that the English Ambassador at the *Hague* [the same Sir *Dudley Carleton*] had represented to the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, the ecclesiastical affairs of *Holland* to the prejudice of the Remonstrants." *Abridgment*, vol. I. p. 326.

<sup>x</sup> In all doctrinal points: entering a protest, that the church of *England* disapproved some of the *disciplinarian* Canons. *Fuller*, X. p. 81, 82.

*Davenant*; and *Balcanqual* was made Master of the *Savoy*. These particulars may be found in *Fuller's Church-History*, and other memorials of those times; and are sufficient to shew, that at this period, and for some time after, *James* was no favourer of the *Arminian* Theology.

Perhaps indeed there never was a period, from his first accession to the *English* Crown, till the day of his death, when he would not have made his divinity bend to his politics. He hated the Puritans, not for their doctrines, but for their dislike to a Prelacy. He thought a monarchy as necessary for the church as for the state; and had much the same idea of *Classes* and *Consistories*, that he had of *Parliaments*. He imagined, that whoever was not a friend to episcopal power, must have the same objections to that of Kings. And perhaps he was not much mistaken, with respect to his own contemporaries.

The Calvinists in *Holland* strenuously insisted, that the Church, constituted, as theirs was, upon a republican model, had the sole power of defining matters of faith, and of distinguishing between points necessary and unnecessary; and they held, that the civil magistrate was bound to enforce the churches decisions, and to discourage and suppress all sects and heresies contrary thereunto. They went farther still. They held that the civil magistrate who did not his duty in this province, ceased to be a child of God, and might be deposed from his office. And some of them  
carried



carried this matter so far, that, upon some remissness in the States to suppress what they called *the enemies of God*, a deputation had been sent from the clergy, to offer the sovereignty of six of the seven united Provinces, to Queen *Elizabeth* <sup>y</sup>.

It cannot be denied, that many of the *English* Puritans entertained the same notions. Perhaps the greater part of them in secret. When any extraordinary countenance was shewn to papists, either by *James*, or indeed, before him, by *Elizabeth*, the Puritans gave no obscure intimations of what they thought of the Government; and the less discreet among them openly avowed the lawfulness of resisting ungodly Princes, both in the reigns of *Elizabeth* and *James* <sup>z</sup>.

The King, however, was not so weak, but that he saw plainly, Popery was at no great distance from *Arminianism*. The bent of the nation lay against both. And probably *Abbot's* influence with him, while it lasted, added to the principles (or, if you please, the *prejudices*) of his own education in *Scotland*, kept him in these sentiments, the rather perhaps as he did not see, how what were called the *factious* attempts of the Puritans, were countenanced by the Divinity of *Calvin*.

<sup>y</sup> *La Roche*, vol. I. p. 229.

<sup>z</sup> See *Strype's* Life of *Whitgift*, p. 291. And *Puckering's* Speech in *Fuller's* Worthies, Tit. *Yorkshire*, p. 201. *Puckering*, without doubt, exaggerated. But his word may be taken with respect to the point of the Queen's Supremacy in ecclesiastical causes,

It must be confessed, that with such a Prince the *Arminian* Bishops had but a difficult game to play; but they managed it like workmen. And in the end, turned even the most unfavourable circumstances to their own account.

*Grotius*, and the Remonstrants in *Holland*, pleaded for *Toleration*<sup>2</sup>; and, from their holding this principle, artfully enough suggested their superior respect for the civil powers: as that would keep Church-authority under the hatches.

*James* had no idea of the righteousness of a toleration. And he saw that if it took place in matters of doctrine, it might, upon equally good grounds, be claimed for opinions and practices relating to discipline. And perhaps his objection to the edict of the States General, mentioned before from *Burigni*, might be founded upon the *tolerating* powers, vested by it in the civil magistrate.

The *Arminian* Bishops detested *toleration* as much as *James* could do, and for the same reasons: but went much farther than their brethren in *Holland*, in their concessions to the civil power; *alleging*, that sovereignty, particularly in *Monarchs*, was *jure divino*, and uncontroulable. They knew this principle could do them no harm, qualified as it was, by *James's* notions of *Episcopacy*:

<sup>2</sup> *Quinquarticulariam litem, tanti non facerem, nisi conjunctionem sibi haberet eam, quæ est de discretionem necessariorum dogmatum a non necessariis, sive de mutua Christianorum tolerantia. Episcopus, apud Hickman Animadvers. p. 122.*

and for the rest, it was a sure bait to draw him in to whatever they might see fit to build upon it.

But the great difficulty lay here. They had not only the King, but the people to manage. The Puritan party was strong, and respectable for the quality, as well as the numbers, of its adherents. And it would not be so easily comprehended by the people, how they, who were so perfectly right in their divinity, could be so far wrong in their politics. The next step then was to cast some slur upon the doctrines of the Puritans, and, if possible, to wean both the King and people from their fondness for them.

Fuller, in his Church-History, informs us, that the Archbishop of *Spalato* was the first who used the word *Puritan*, to signify the defenders of matters doctrinal, in the *English* church. "Formerly," says he, "the word was only taken to denote such as dissented from the Hierarchy in discipline, and church-government, which was now extended to brand such as were *Anti-arminian* in their judgments." And he confesses, that the word, in this extensive signification, was afterwards improved to asperse the most orthodox in doctrine, and religious in conversation <sup>a</sup>.

These *improvers* were the *Arminian* Bishops and their adherents. We have seen above, *what* they *insinuated* to *James*, upon occasion of obtaining from him certain injunctions sent to *Oxford*,

<sup>a</sup> Fuller, Ch. Hist. B. x. p. 99, 100.

## 268 THE CONFESSIONAL.

*anno* 1616. But still, the established Articles of religion were on the side of the *doctrinal* Puritans. The writers against *Arminianism* made that appear beyond dispute: and *Laud* himself durst not deny it.

The next step, therefore, was to get the Puritan party silenced, from preaching or printing any thing upon the subject. *Abbot's* influence with King *James* had been broke, by his untracable firmness in the matter of the Earl of *Essex's* divorce; as well as by other accidents: and a misfortune in his private conduct had afforded room for the full effect of *Laud's* intrigues, who lost no opportunity of recommending himself and his system to *James*.

The first-fruits of *Laud's* power over the King, appeared in those *injunctions* or directions, bearing date *August* 4th, 1622, wherein, among other things, it was enjoined, that “no Preacher, under the degree of a Bishop or a Dean,—should from thenceforth presume to preach—the deep points of *Predestination, Election, Reprobation*, or of the *universality, efficacy, resistibility*, or *irresistibility of God's Grace, &c.*”<sup>b</sup>

<sup>b</sup> *Heylin's History of Laud*, p. 97. who confesses that his Hero had a hand in digesting and drawing up these injunctions. What censures were passed upon them may be seen in *Wilson* and *Fuller*, sub *anno* 1622. who both give the injunctions at large. These censures are acknowledged by *Heylin* himself, with great indignation, who, as a less suspected witness than the others in these points, may be consulted, p. 99.

One



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 269

One might ask how *James* could reconcile himself to a measure, which, in the case of the edict of the States-General, had given him pain? That is to say, how he could, as a *civil magistrate*, assume a right of making decrees in matters of religion.

His Divines would have told us, upon this occasion, 1. That he was a civil magistrate *jure divino*; which was not the case with *republican magistrates*. 2. That by a saving clause in the end of the *directions*, this was only a kind of *interim*, till the next *Convocation* should assemble.

This, however, was all that *James* could be brought to during his reign; unless the *Declaration*, at the head of the xxxix Articles, is to be ascribed to him; which however is a problem I cannot take upon me to solve; nor is it very material.

In his successor, *Laud* found a King more to his mind. *James* had no personal esteem for *Laud*, and gave him a Bishoprick with much reluctance. His busy spirit was accordingly, during *James's* reign, obliged to operate in subordination to some Prelates, who had more of the King's confidence.

But *Charles I.* was wholly at *Laud's* devotion. Hitherto the *Calvinists* were barely silenced, and perhaps hardly that. *Wilson* tells us, "the Archbishop recommended it to his Diocesans, that these directions might be put in execution  
"with

"with caution <sup>c</sup>." And Fuller says, "These instructions were not pressed with equal rigour in all places, and that some over-active officials were more busy than their Bishops, &c. <sup>d</sup>." However, it is natural to suppose these injunctions had some effect; especially among those who expected to rise in the Church.

It was not, however, sufficient for Laud's purposes, barely to silence Calvin. He wanted to have Arminius take the chair, and to dictate to the church of England, instead of the other.

To try how this would take, he sets Montague to work, a bold, hot headed man (but a good scholar <sup>e</sup>); who scrupled not to exemplify, and avow the political, as well as the theological creed of Arminius, in the most positive and explicit terms. Take the story from an unquestionable authority.

"Mr. Richard Montague, in the one and twentieth of King James, had published a book, which he named, *a new Gag for an old Goose*, in answer to a Popish book, intituled, *A Gag for the new Gospel*. The business was then questioned in Parliament <sup>f</sup>, and committed to

<sup>c</sup> Life and Reign of King James, p. 201.

<sup>d</sup> Ch. Hist. X. Book, p. 111.

<sup>e</sup> Selden, *de diis Syris*, p. 361. allows that Montague was *Græcè simul et Latine doctus*.

<sup>f</sup> Upon the complaint of two Divines of the Diocese of Norwich, Mr. Yates and Mr. Ward. "They accused him of  
" the

" the Archbishop of *Canterbury* [*Abbot*], and  
 " ended in an admonition to *Montague*.

" Afterwards the Bishops of the *Arminian*  
 " party, consulted [consulting] the propagation  
 " of the five articles condemned in the synod of  
 " *Dort*, concluded that Mr. *Montague*, being al-  
 " ready engaged in the quarrel, should publish  
 " this latter book [*Appello Cæsarem*], at first at-  
 " tested by their joint authorities, which after-  
 " wards they withdrew by subtilty, having pro-  
 " cured the subscription of Dr. *Francis White*  
 " [Dean of *Carlisle*], whom they left to appear a-  
 " lone in the testimony, as himself oft-times com-  
 " plained publicly. The Archbishop disallow-  
 " ed the book, and sought to suppress it; never-  
 " theless it was printed, and dedicated unto  
 " King *Charles*, whereby that party did endeavour  
 " to engage him in the beginning of his reign. The  
 " house appointed a committee to examine the  
 " errors therein, and gave the Archbishop thanks  
 " for the admonition given to the author, whose  
 " books they voted to be contrary to the articles  
 " established by the Parliament, to tend to the  
 " King's dishonour, and disturbance of church  
 " and state, and took bond for his appear-  
 " ance &c."

" dangerous errors of *Arminianism* and *Popery*, deserting our  
 " cause, instead of defending it." Fuller, Ch. Hist. B. XI. p.

119. *Yates* afterwards wrote against *Montague*.

‡ *Russetworth*, vol. I. p. 173.

*Charles*

## 272 THE CONFESSIONAL.

*Charles* at first attempted to take *Montague* out of the hands of the Parliament, by claiming him for his chaplain, &c. But afterwards he thought better of it, and determined to leave him at their mercy; which being signified to *Laud* by the Duke of *Buckingham*, "he [*Laud*]" thought it a "matter of such ominous concernment," says *Fuller*, "that he entered the same in his *Diary*, "in these words: *I seem to see a cloud arise, and threatening the church of England; God for his mercy dissipate it*."

But this little spirited champion was not so to be baffled. He knew the Duke's power with the King, and, in conjunction with the Bishops of *Rocheſter* and *Oxford*, recommended Mr. *Montague's* cause to him, as the cause of the church of *England*.

*Rusſworth* hath given us the topics they insisted on in this recommendation, which I shall here transcribe; taking leave to intermix such remarks as occur upon the several particulars of it.

"They shew, that some of the opinions which "offended many, were no other than the resolved "doctrine of this church."

These opinions were probably such, as related to the *divine right* of Kings. I have not *Montague's Appeal*, but suppose he might justify his doctrines out of the Homilies, Articles, *Bancroft's*

<sup>h</sup> *Church Hist.* Book xi. p. 121.



Canons, and other documents collected by Bishop *Bilson*. When our churchmen *resolved* these points, they were writing against the popish King-killers. But, not confining themselves to the confutation of arguments merely Popish, they made the right of Kings absolutely *indefeasible* in all cases; of which *Laud* and his crew made their advantage.

“ — And some of them are curious points, “ disputed in the schools, and to be left to the “ liberty of learned men to abound in their own “ sense —.”

These were the *five points* of doctrine, disputed between the *Calvinists* and *Arminians*. Could *Laud* have found the means to frame and establish a new set of Articles, I am persuaded, he would have left little room for the *Calvinists to abound in their own sense*. As things were circumstanced, he was to make the best of the present set, which was, by pleading *in words* for a latitude of senses, and by insinuating, that these disputed points were matters of no great consequence, and might be *innocently* held either way. We shall see by and by how his *actions* contrasted these verbal pretences.

“ — It being the great fault of the council “ of *Trent* to require subscription to school-opi- “ nions, and the approved moderation of the “ church of *England*, to refuse [*perhaps* refute] “ the *apparent dangers and errors* of the church  
of

"of *Rome*; but not to be overbusy with scholastic niceties ———."

The council of *Trent* is brought in here only as a stalking horse. The insinuation is, that the council of *Trent* did, and the church of *England* did *not*, require subscription to *these* school-opinions in a determinate sense. The very reverse of which is the honest truth. "*Melancthon*, as may be seen above, accused the council of *Trent* of making *crafty* decrees, that they might defend their errors by things *ambiguously* spoken." That is to say, by such ambiguities, as permitted the *Jesuits* and *Dominicans* to abound in their own sense respectively, upon these very school-points <sup>i</sup>. And when *Grotius* came to plead the cause of the *Arminians* before the Magistrates of *Amsterdam*, he alledged among other things, "that the doctrines disputed in *Holland*, had not been decided by the church of *Rome*, (and consequently not by the council of *Trent*) though she is extremely fond of decisions." Which doctrines were the very same with the *school-opinions* disputed in *England* <sup>k</sup>. On the other hand, the *apparent dangers and errors* of the church of *Rome*, were doctrines and practices, so founded upon the *Arminian* side of these school-niceties, that the church of *England* did not think

<sup>i</sup> See above, chap. iv. See likewise, *Heylin's* *Quinquarticular Hist.* p. 26. and *Hickman's* *Animad.* p. 42.

<sup>k</sup> *La Roche*, *Abridgment*, vol. I. p. 344.

the *apparent errors or dangers* could be refused or refused, without determining these *school-niceties* the other way. Which was accordingly done in the xxxix Articles. Was *Laud* ignorant of all this, or was he playing the Jesuit? And, of all things, that *he* should talk of the *moderation* of the church of *England*!

“ ——— Moreover, in the *present case*, they al-  
“ ledge, that in the time of *Henry VIII*, when the  
“ clergy submitted to the King’s supremacy, the  
“ submission was so resolved, that, in case of any  
“ difference in the church, the King and the Bi-  
“ shops were to determine the matter, in a na-  
“ tional synod.”

But, who made the difference in the church in the *present case*? These very Bishops. — And was it not most reasonable, that they should be both Judges and Parties? But this was calculated for the meridian of *Charles’s* apprehension; and to furnish him with an argument for taking *Montague’s* cause out of the hands of the Parliament.

“ ——— And if any other judge in matters of  
“ doctrine be now allowed, we depart from the  
“ ordinance of Christ, and the continual practice  
“ of the church.”

Had the Parliament called for this *ordinance of Christ*, where would these Prelates have found it? Had they forgot that *K. Henry VIII*, so lately quoted, passing by the Bishops, and the national

T

Synod

## 276 THE CONFESSIONAL.

Synod, made the Universities of *Europe* judges in a very important point of doctrine?

“ — Herewithal they intimated, that, if the  
“ church be once brought down below herself,  
“ even Majesty itself would soon be impeached.”

No Bishop, no King.

“ — They say farther, that K. *James*, in  
“ his rare wisdom, approved *all* the opinions in  
“ this book.”

Perhaps some tolerably just notion may be formed from what goes before, what opinions, concerning the five points, *James* approved. It is highly probable he continued a Calvinist in judgment, even to the very last. No doubt but he approved *Montague's* political principles.

“ — And that most of the contrary opi-  
“ nions were debated at *Lambeth*, and ready to  
“ be published, but were suppressed by Q. *Eli-*  
“ *zabeth*.”

And were these opinions only *debated* at *Lambeth*? or only *ready* to be published? Surely *Bancroft* gave a different account of them at the *Hampton-Court* Conference. These Bishops would have it believed, that Queen *Elizabeth* suppressed these Articles, out of a dislike to the subject-matter of them. Whereas the dislike was to the *method* used in the procuring of them, and the Archbishop's sending them to *Cambridge*, to be disputed in the schools. She was certainly displeased with *Peter Baro*, for espousing the contrary



trary doctrines, which indeed gave the first occasion of framing these Articles. And *Baro* being prosecuted in the Vice-Chancellor's court at *Cambridge*, for contradicting these Articles, after *Whitgift* had received orders to *suspend* them, the Queen's *suppression* could amount to a very small matter, since it is plain they still continued to have their currency in *Cambridge*, as much as before <sup>1</sup>.

“ — And so continued [*i. e.* to be suppressed] “till of late they received countenance at the “Synod of *Dort*, which was a synod of another “nation, and, to us, no way binding, till received “by public authority.”

That King *James* did not *continue to suppress* the *Lambeth* Articles, is plain from his sending them to *Dort*, as part of the doctrine of the church of *England*; and to *Ireland*, where they were incorporated with *their* Articles of Religion. And Mr. *Pym*, in his speech in Parliament, *Janu.* 27, 1628, says expressly, *They were avowed by us and our state* <sup>m</sup>. On the other hand, one would wonder, what, in the opinion of these Bishops, amounted to “receiving the Synod of *Dort* by “public authority.” King *James* sent, by a formal deputation, six of his Divines to that Synod, who concurred with it in its decisions, concern-

<sup>1</sup> *Strype's Life of Whitgift*, book iv. chap. xvii. xviii. See likewise *Sykes's Reply to Waterland's Supplement*.

<sup>m</sup> *Rushworth*, vol. I. p. 647.

ing all doctrinal matters. The king approved what they had done, and no churchmen in the kingdom were more favoured by him. This puts me in mind of Mr. *Le Clerc's* observation upon the conduct of the *French* Divines in regard to the council of *Trent*. In their public scholastic disputations, they cite the canons of that council, as decisive against the heterodox side of theological questions. But, being pressed with the absurdity of some of those canons, by their Protestant adversaries, their cant is, that the council of *Trent* was never received in *France* <sup>a</sup>.

“ ——— And they boldly affirm, that they “ cannot conceive what use there can be of civil “ government in the commonwealth, or of external ministry in the church, if such fatal opinions, as some are, which are opposite to those “ delivered by Mr. *Montague*, be publicly taught “ and maintained.”

This may pass for what it is, a *bold affirmation*, and no more; calculated to blacken the Puritan party, and to insinuate, that nothing they held, either with respect to religion or politics, could possibly be right.

“ Such,” says *Rusworth*, “ was the opinion “ of these forenamed Bishops; but others of

<sup>a</sup> *Defense des Sentimens, &c. sur l'Hist. Critique. Lett. xiii.*

“ eminent

"eminent learning were of a different judgment."

And no wonder. It would be no easy matter to shew so much prevarication in reasoning, or so much falshood and misrepresentation of Facts, in any other rescript of the same length.

The event of this matter was, that *Montague* in the end was delivered from parliamentary punishment by a royal pardon. And, after the dissolution of the Parliament, *Laud* had *Charles* in his hands, and molded him which way he would.

*Laud*, accordingly, got the prohibition to preach upon these controverted points, extended to Deans and Bishops; in consequence of which, Bishop *Davenant* was convened before the council, where he was reprimanded by *Harsnet*, Archbishop of *York*, for transgressing his Majesty's Declaration, in a Lent-sermon at Court, 1626, (the crafty *Laud* walking by the while, without speaking one word). *Davenant* insisted, that he had not broken the Declaration; and they could not contradict him, but were forced to fly to his Majesty's intention, which turned out to be, "that he would not have this high point [of Predestination] meddled withall, or debated, either the one way or the other<sup>p</sup>." It was but a very little before, that *Laud* had said, "these cu-

\* *Rushworth*, vol. I. p. 177.

† *Fuller's Church Hist.* b. xi. p. 138—141.

280 THE CONFESSIONAL.

"rious points should be left to the liberty of  
"learned men, *to abound in their own sense.*" But  
the Parliament, which differed from him on this  
head, was now dissolved, and most probably *Laud*  
never expected to see another.

I hope, the foregoing particulars may be suffi-  
cient to shew, that subscribing with a latitude, or  
taking particular Articles in different senses, was  
an artifice of Archbishop *Laud's*, to open a way  
for his own *Arminian* opinions.

He hath been followed, however, by many in  
this practice, who have neither had his views,  
nor approved his example, in other things; and  
who therefore must be supposed to have some  
reasons of their own, to determine them in a  
practice, which, at first sight, is hardly defensible.  
Let us consider what these reasons may be.

1. Then, it is generally understood, that the  
points in dispute between the *Arminians* and the  
*Calvinists*, are points of no consequence, and may  
be held either way, without any detriment to the  
true faith.

Dr. *Nicholls* calls them, "Theological points,  
"which do not affect the main of religion." So  
did *Heylin* before him; and he had it undoubt-  
edly from his master *Laud*. King *James* too,  
once upon a time, thought fit to say, "that, if the  
"subject of *Vorstius's* Heresies [in his book *de*  
"Deo] had not been grounded upon questions of  
"higher quality, than touching the number and  
"nature of the sacraments, the points of merit,

" of



" of *justification*, of purgatory, of the visible head  
 " of the church, or any such matters, we should  
 " never have troubled ourselves with the busi-  
 " nefs."

Upon which, Mr. *Tindal*, the translator of *Rapin Thoyras*, thus descants : " As if wrong no-  
 " tions or errors concerning the *essence* of God,  
 " were more pernicious, than such corrupt no-  
 " tions and principles, as are destructive of mo-  
 " rality, and repugnant to God's moral chara-  
 " cter &c." Such, I suppose, as Mr. *Tindal*  
 takes the notions and principles of the *Calvinists*  
 (among others) to be ; and consequently esteems  
 them points of great importance. It is much,  
 however, if *Vorstius* or his followers did not draw  
 some conclusions of the *moral* kind, from their  
 speculations on the *essence* of God.

Bishop *Burnet*, in his travels, met with an emi-  
 nent divine among the *Lutherans* in *Germany*,  
 upon whom he pressed an union with the *Calvin-  
 ists*, as necessary upon many accounts. To which  
 the said Divine answered, that, " He wondered  
 " much to see a Divine of the church of *Eng-  
 " land*, press that so much on him, when we,  
 " notwithstanding the dangers we were then in,  
 " could not agree our differences. They differed  
 " about *important* matters, concerning the attri-  
 " butes of God and his providence ; concerning  
 " the guilt of sin, whether it was to be charged

<sup>1</sup> *Tindal's Rapin*, 8vo. 1730. vol. ix. p. 333.

“on God, or the sinner; and whether men  
 “ought to make good use of their faculties; or  
 “if they ought to trust entirely to an irresistible  
 “grace. These were matters of great moment.  
 “But, he said, we in *England* differed only  
 “about forms of government and worship, and  
 “things which were of their own nature indif-  
 “ferent, &c. &c.”

It would be a very strange thing, if the scrip-  
 tures, rightly understood, should give any *real*  
 occasion to the question, whether the guilt of sin  
 is to be charged on God or the sinner? But if  
 occasion is given for such a dispute, whether *real*  
 or *imaginary*, it is doubtless a point of high im-  
 portance, since no such question can be decided,  
 without bringing the supreme God into judgment,  
 as a party, with one of his creatures, and subject-  
 ing him to the sentence of another of them. The  
 scriptures, in truth, give no just occasion for any  
 such controversy. But if occasion is taken for  
 such disputes from Creeds, Confessions, and Ar-  
 ticles of religion of human device; and if, in  
 particular, such a dispute may be raised from the  
 express terms of our own Articles, should not a  
 serious and considerate man be cautious how he  
 subscribes them? Would it not be inexcusably  
 rash to take it for granted, that they contain mat-  
 ters of no consequence?

\* Preface to *Burnet's* Expos. at the end.

Perhaps,

Perhaps, our present subscribers are generally, tho' not universally, of the *Arminian* persuasion.

\* Mr. *La Roche*, indeed, says, "The doctrine of *Arminius*, whom that Prince [*James I.*] called an enemy to God, has been long ago the doctrine of the church of *England*." Abridgment, vol. i. p. 319. I should be glad to know what the church representative would say to this, and whether they would allow of this representation of *La Roche*, or adopt that of another foreign Divine, who argues thus, "Though the *Arminians* are particularly favoured by the church of *England*; though *Arminianism* may be said to have become predominant among the members of that church, or at least to have lent its influence in mitigating some of its articles in the private sentiments of those who subscribe them; yet the *Thirty-nine Articles* of the church of *England* still maintain their authority; and when we judge of the doctrine and discipline of any church, it is more natural to form this judgment from its established *Credo*s and *Confession of Faith*, than from the sentiments and principles of particular persons." See Mr. *MacLaine's* note [\*] on *Mosheim*. *Eccles. Hist.* vol. ii. p. 574. By which it should seem, that the doctrine of the church of *England* is not, nor, since the establishment of the xxxix Articles, ever was *Arminian*. Both these writers speak with great respect of the church of *England* on all occasions, and I dare say, nothing was farther from the thoughts of either of them, when they made these observations, than to do the least dishonour to that church. The reason of their respective judgments, which soever of them you agree with, is obvious; namely, the apparent disagreement of the doctrine of many of the most eminent divines of the church of *England*, with the doctrine of the Articles. And, after this, is it not a jest to talk of the xxxix Articles as a *Confession of Faith and Doctrines*, to the truth of which the Governors of the church of *England*, have a right to require all those to subscribe who are admitted to the office of public teachers in it, by way of giving the governors of the church sufficient assurance of the soundness of their Faith

## 184 THE CONFESSIONAL

I mean, such of them as are of *any* persuasion at all. For, I doubt, few of them consider (if indeed they know) the difference between *that* and the persuasion of the *Calvinists*. Surely it concerns such subscribers not a little to be satisfied, whether our present Articles are truly and properly capable of an *Arminian* sense or not. But of this more by and by.

2. Another thing which draws in subscribers of the present generation, is, that, whereas *Arminianism* was heretofore esteemed to be the back-door to popery and arbitrary power, that notion has, upon examination, been found to be utterly groundless, and the opinions so called, absolutely innocent of the charge.

“*Rapin*,” says Mr. *Tindal* in a note, “as well as most of our writers, especially those of the Puritan party, seem to confound two things, which have no manner of relation to each other, *viz.* Arminianism, and High-church principles.” He then puts down five propo-

*and Doctrines?* This is Dr. *Rutherford*’s language in his *Vindication*; not indeed with respect to the xxxix Articles of his own church, for the *same* confession of faith and doctrines to which his *Vindication* is applied, may be a very *different* confession of faith and doctrines from that contained in the said Articles. And yet, as the learned Professor takes the Governors of the church of *England* among others, into his patronage, one would think, he would hardly waste his precious time in vindicating to them a *right* which they do not exercise.

sitions,



sitions, which, according to him, contain the Arminian doctrine, which the Synod of *Dort*, in their wisdom, thought fit to condemn. After which he says, "Now nothing can be more evident, than that a man may embrace all these opinions, without being one jot the more a friend to popery, or arbitrary power<sup>t</sup>."

Mr. *Tindal* should not have been so positive. He did not so much as know what the five *Arminian* points, condemned at the Synod of *Dort*, were; as any one may be satisfied by comparing the propositions Mr. *T.* hath exhibited, with the genuine ones in *La Roche's* Abridgment of *Brandt*.

The *Calvinists* too certainly inferred the lawfulness of resisting wicked and unrighteous Princes, from their theological principles of *Election* and *Grace*.

*Heylin* says, that *Calvin* called the contrary doctrine *civil idolatry*<sup>u</sup>. And *Grotius*, artfully enough, improved the prejudices which Magistrates would entertain against these unprincipely notions, to the advantage of his own party, by insinuating the infinite reverence which the principles of the *Arminians* obliged them to have for the civil powers. The English *Arminians* went still farther. By excluding *Election* from any share in the foundation of Dominion, and substi-

<sup>t</sup> *Tindal's* Rapin, *ut supra*, vol. x. p. 16.

<sup>u</sup> History of the Presbyterians, in the beginning.

tuting

tuting indefeasible hereditary right *jure divino* in its place, resistance, even to a *Nero* or a *Caligula*, became a damnable sin. *Laud*, as we have seen, affirmed boldly, that *civil* Government would be useless, if some *fatal* opinions, opposite to those of *Montague*, were to prevail. And Mr. *Tindal* himself confesses, that *Laud*, *Neile*, and *Montague*, were for setting the King above the Laws. And I know some very worthy and eminent persons, warm and fast friends to the civil and religious rights of mankind, who are of opinion to this hour, that resistance, even to wicked Princes, cannot be justified upon religious principles, without having recourse to the theological doctrines of the ancient Puritans and Independants.

If the *Arminians* have learned to separate the divinity of their forefathers from their politics, it is so much the better for the public. But, I fear, they have not been altogether so successful in weeding their doctrine from the seeds of Popery.

That case stands thus: The scandalous traffic of Indulgences gave the first occasion to *Luther* to discover the corruptions of Popery, and afforded him the first grounds of his opposition to them. But *Indulgences* were founded on the *Merit* of Good-works, and that again on *Freewill*; and, what is more, were so founded by *St. Paul's* own reasoning: *To him that worketh is the reward not of grace, but of debt* \*.

\* *Rom. iv. 4.*

The Reformers universally, in a greater or less degree, pursued *Luther's* scheme of interpretation. They thought they had very good grounds in scripture for excluding *Free-will*, from any share in the work of justification. And therefore, when the *Arminians* arose, the Puritans apprehended, with great reason, that, by opening a door to *Free-agency*, it would be impossible to prevent Purgatory, Saint-worship, Indulgences, &c. from breaking in along with it. And they who will take the pains to read *Montague's* Appeal, and *Heylin's* Introduction to his Life of Archbishop *Laud*, will easily discern, that their apprehensions were not groundless.

Whether the connexion between free-agency and merit is real throughout, or where it begins to be broken, I pretend not to decide, or even to examine; being determined, on the present occasion at least, to offend or disturb no man, with my private opinions. One thing, however, I beg leave just to mention, in favour of the *Calvinists*; namely, that some very eminent men of the present generation have gone a great way in their *philosophical disquisitions*, towards vindicating the predestinarian theology of these our forefathers<sup>u</sup>. And, when it is considered that

<sup>u</sup> See Dr. *Hartley's* Observations on Man, *passim*; but particularly his Remarks on the Mechanism of the Human Mind, at the end of the first volume. *Thounsefer's* Letters in the *Magasin François*, published 1750, 1751. In the former edition, I inadvertently added to these citations, *The Preface to Dr. Law's*

so able a writer as Dr. Clayton, the late Bishop of Clogher, could find no other way of establishing the free-will or free-agency of man, but by putting such limitations, as he has done, upon the prescience of God, no reasonable man would hastily conclude, that the *Calvinists* have nothing material to say for themselves \*.

But, to leave the theoretical part of this problem for the present: Those old worthies who predicted the return of Popery, in consequence of the introduction of *Arminianism*, were not so widely mistaken, as to the event, as may be ima-

Translation of *King's* Origin of Evil; for which I ask his pardon. The book was not then at hand; and I cited from my memory. But what I meant to cite was *A Preliminary Dissertation* concerning the *Fundamental Principle of Virtue or Morality*, prefixed to Dr. Law's Translation abovementioned, but the work of another hand. Perhaps it may be thought that I had no right to join *this* author to the other two; and to those who think so, I readily give up the point, after observing that Dr. Hartley makes the *Mechanism of the Human Mind* one consequence flowing from the doctrine of *Associations*, which was undeniably held, and pushed pretty far by the author of the *Preliminary Dissertation*, who, as I have been informed upon good authority, was the late reverend and ingenious Mr. GAY, Fellow of *Sidney-college* in *Cambridge*.

\* *Thoughts on Self-Love, Innate Ideas, &c.* Lond. 1753. The Apostle Paul hath said, *There must be heresies*, 1 Cor. xi. 9. not *ex necessitate rei ab intus*, but from the perverse nature of man, say his interpreters. Perhaps, if men had been candid, capable, and upright throughout, all their controversies, from Paul's time to this hour, might have been avoided, save one, that concerning *Predestination*, which must probably have arisen at all events.

gined.



gined. They had good reasons to expect it, from the whole conduct of *Laud* and his fellows. And, though these were seasonably stop'd in their career, their principles have been espoused and pursued by their successors, in such sort, as to give more than a suspicion to some competent observers, that the church of *England* has been, and still is, though by degrees imperceptible to vulgar eyes, edging back once more towards Popery.

“From the beginning of *Charles I.*,” says a sensible writer, “the pulpit took up a new scheme, “under the particular influence of Archbishop *Laud*. A scheme so entirely new, that it was “remonstrated against by the Parliament, as contrary to the Articles, and as what had a tendency to carry back the nation into Popery. “*Perhaps, in some measure, the apprehension of that Parliament has been verified.* And from *Charles I.* the new system hath chiefly prevailed, down “to the present period.” And, he might have added, “has been attended with suitable “effects.”

If any one is desirous to see these *apprehensions verified* in particular instances, he may satisfy himself by consulting a pamphlet written by Dr. *Du Moulin*, some time History-Professor in *Oxford*, printed in 1680, which might be conti-

\* *Seagrave's True Protestant*, p. 25.

† Intituled, *A short and true Account of the several Advances the Church of England hath made towards Rome.*

nued even to the present times, by the addition of examples, still more striking than those of *Du Moulin*. The effect of which cannot be more convincingly proved, than by the great and alarming increase of Popery in these kingdoms<sup>a</sup>.

The clergy of the church of *England*, it is true, have constantly disclaimed all connexion with Popery, or any design or disposition to promote that cause; which however is but an equivocal proof of a different spirit, and none at all, that the tendency of their doctrines doth not bend towards Popery.

When *Jansenius* published his system of *Grace*, the good Catholics taxed him with *Calvinism*. In vain did he endeavour to wipe off the aspersion. In vain did he write most bitterly against the Protestants, in order to convince his incredulous brethren that he was not to be ranked among them. They returned again and again to the charge, and confirmed it, by shewing both the origin and tendency of his doctrines<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> See Dr. *Stebbing's* two little Tracts against Popery, just published. Whoever will be at the pains to consult this Doctor's *Polemical Tracts*, and compare some passages in them (particularly in his *Rational Inquiry*, &c.) with some things in these little books, will see how he is obliged to lower his high-church notions, to battle the papists; conscious, as it should seem, that his old principles had too much of a popish complexion.

<sup>a</sup> *Quin in Galliis, quod beneficii loco sine dubio numeravit, magnam adeptus erat librorum Calvinianorum copiam, quorum de fontibus hausit Augustini interpretationem, & invenerat homines a Calvinii disciplinâ non alienos, quibus liberiores de Gratia sermones con-*

## THE CONFESSIONAL 291

The Papists have common sense, and can see, no doubt, into the *tendency* of certain opinions, as well as *Luther* or *Calvin* did. And, whatever *Jansenius* could say for himself, the orthodox Catholics saw, that, in the next generation, his followers, if they adhered to his opinions, would, very probably, leave their church: to prevent which, they procured the condemnation of his book, *anno* 1653.

The same suspicions procured the famous Bull *Unigenitus*, condemning the doctrines of Father *Pasquier Quesnel*, in the year 1713. Was this man so treated, because his conduct gave any offence as a Papist? No; he died not only a sincere, but a bigotted son of that church: and, what is more, he so died in a Protestant country, where he was under no necessity to dissemble; namely, at *Amsterdam*, December 2, 1719.—

“He received extreme unction, extended on a matt; he took the holy *viaticum* on his knees; — he made his profession of faith in the pre-

*tulerat*. Bayle's Dict. JANSENIUS, remark [F], cited from a book, intituled *Jansenius Suspectus*, ascribed to the Jesuit *Vavassor*. The *Jansenists*, as may well be supposed, endeavoured, by all possible means, to rid themselves of this imputation. Mr. *Bayle* reports their success in the following words. “The *Jansenists* have maintained, with equal heat, that, upon the point of *Liberty*, they were not *Calvinists*. There are no artifices, or ill-grounded distinctions, but what have been made use of to colour that pretence; and all this to avoid the dangerous consequences they foresaw would follow their confessing any conformity with the *Calvinists*.” *Ibid*. Rem. [H].

U

“ fence

## 292 THE CONFESSIONAL.

“ sence of two apostolical protonotaries, — im-  
 “ porting, that he believed all the truths, which  
 “ *Jesus Christ* taught his church; that he will  
 “ die within the bosom of it; and condemns all  
 “ errors which it condemns, or shall condemn.  
 “ He acknowledges the Pope the first Vicar of  
 “ *Jesus Christ*, and the apostolical see, the centre  
 “ of union. — But, withal, still believes he had  
 “ taught nothing in the obnoxious book, which  
 “ is not conformable to the faith of the church.”  
 — And had his superiors thought so too, they  
 had all the reason in the world to be satisfied  
 with his edifying catholicism.

But go to the propositions, extracted from his  
 book for condemnation, and you will presently  
 see, that he was not only of *Calvin's* mind in the  
 articles of *Grace, Justification, &c.* but had built  
 upon those principles, some other doctrines, which  
 are in little agreement with the faith he professes  
 to repose in the church <sup>b</sup>.

I forbear to mention the more recent disturb-  
 ances that have been in *France*, about the same  
 doctrines; concerning which it has been imagined,  
 that if the church and state could not find the  
 means, by their united powers, totally to suppress  
 the Jansenists; Jansenism would infallibly pro-  
 duce a Reformation of Religion, upon the true  
 Protestant plan.

<sup>b</sup> These propositions may be seen in *The present State of the  
 Republic of Letters*, for July, 1733. From whence also the ac-  
 count above of *Quesnel's* death is taken.



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 293

The result is, that our first Reformers framed and placed the xxxix Articles, and more particularly those called *Calvinistical*, as the surest and strongest barriers to keep out Popery. A Protestant Divine may possibly have his objections against the plain sense of those Articles; but, in this case, he ought not to subscribe them at all. For if he can bring himself to assent to, and subscribe them in a *catholic* sense, I would desire to know what security the church has, that he does not put the like *catholic* sense (with which he may be furnished by the Jesuits) upon those Articles which concern Transubstantiation and Purgatory?

In answer to this, we are told, that these doctrinal Articles concerning Grace, Free-will, Predestination, &c. are susceptible of an *Arminian* sense; and this is the

Third Inducement our modern subscribers have to plead.

Archbishop *Laud*, as we have seen, was the earliest patron of this device: However, I cannot think the practice would have thriven as it has done, if he had been its only patron. His name is in no great veneration with the rational part of the *English* Clergy, particularly with those who are the most strenuous advocates for a latitude in subscribing. And, by an unaccountable reverse of things, the men who are enamoured the most of *Laud's* political and hierarchical principles, have contended with the utmost zeal,

against putting a double sense upon any of the Articles.

It seems to me, indeed, that these two parties have not perfectly understood each other concerning this *double sense*, of which one affirms, and the other denies, the Articles to be capable. Let us consider this matter, with respect still to the doctrinal Articles called Calvinistical.

When the controversy between the *Calvinists* and *Arminians* first appeared in form, the latter were told in plain terms, "that whosoever opposed the absolute decree of *Predestination*, "crossed the doctrine of the church of *England*; "and that the *English* Universities, and Bishops, "had always condemned the contradictory to "absolute decrees \*."

This has been often denied, and as often re-afferted. Dr. *Waterland*, in his Supplement, labours strenuously, with old *Heylin's* tools, to prove that our Articles in particular are *Anti-calvinistical*.

But the author of the *Reply to the Supplement*, who is said to be Dr. *Sykes*, hath so effectually confuted him, that it is not likely *that* pretence will ever be revived any more.

After Dr. *Sykes* hath proved his point against the *Supplement*, he subjoins the following ingenuous acknowledgment.

\* Bishop *Davenant*, Animadversions on a treatise, intituled, *God's Love to Mankind*, p. 6.

"But,

“ But, without entering into any farther histo-  
 “ rical disquisitions, I think it is evident that the  
 “ Articles were made by men who were *thorough-*  
 “ *ly* in *St. Austin's* Scheme, and that they meant  
 “ to express *that*. They chose to express them-  
 “ selves with great moderation and temper; in  
 “ consequence of which, men of different opinions  
 “ *have thought themselves at liberty* to take a lati-  
 “ tude, in order to come in. Accordingly men  
 “ of very different opinions can, and do sub-  
 “ scribe; and, since the words are capable of such  
 “ meaning, an *Arminian* honestly subscribes to  
 “ the general words; whereas, were the *sense* of  
 “ the compiler, and not his *words* only, the  
 “ standard, none but a *Calvinist* could honestly  
 “ subscribe <sup>d</sup>.”

I think it very evident, that Dr. *Waterland* and his Antagonist meant, by *a latitude in subscribing*, two very different things. Dr. *Waterland* could never mean to exclude a *Calvinist* from subscribing the seventeenth Article: since the utmost he ventures to say of it, is, “ I am rather of opinion, “ that the Article leans to the *Anti-calvinian* “ persuasion.” Dr. *Waterland*, therefore, was of opinion, that the compilers left room both for the *Calvinist* and the *Arminian* to subscribe. And that both the *Calvinist* and *Arminian* may honestly subscribe, that is, consistently with the *sense*, or the *intention*, of the compiler.

<sup>d</sup> *Reply*, p. 39.

On the contrary, Dr. Sykes is of opinion, that, with respect to the *sense* or *intention* of the compilers, the *Arminian* sense is quite excluded, and accordingly derives the allowance of a Latitude to the *Arminian*, from the sense the *general words* will receive. And this, as I take it, is the *latitude*, or the *literal* and *grammatical* sense, for which Bishop Burnet, Dr. Clarke, and perhaps the Doctors Nicholls and Bennet, contend.

I apprehend, that, if Dr. W.'s hypothesis could be supported by proper evidence, every one will allow, that he exhibits much the *honest* scheme of *Latitude*, of the two. But that is impossible; and Dr. Sykes's premisses, that the *Calvinistical* sense of the Articles, exclusive of the *Arminian* sense, was the sense of the compilers, stand indisputable.

But how could honest men ever bring themselves to think, they were at liberty to put a sense upon a writing, which the authors of that writing never intended? The writing in question, is a public writing; and no public authority is pretended for taking this liberty, but *His Majesty's Declaration*, which, whatever weight it might have had in its day, has evidently been of no force, for above an hundred years past.

What makes it more surprizing that any the least stress should be laid upon this Declaration, is, that Dr. Sykes allows, that "supposing the  
"Legislature itself, considered as such, were  
" (without a new declaratory law) to intermeddle

" in



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 297

“ in determining what is the proper sense and extent of the Articles, and what shall be judged agreeable or disagreeable to them,—this would be determining what they had no right to determine.”

Is this Declaration then a new declaratory Law? Nobody, I suppose, will pretend that. So far, therefore, as it intermeddles in determining what is the proper sense and extent of the Articles, and what shall be judged agreeable or disagreeable to them, it pretends to determine what it hath no right to determine. It would have been very strange doctrine in the ears of Dr. Sykes himself, to say, that King *Charles*, in the single capacity of a monarch, had a right to do that, which the legislature in its collective capacity had no right to do.

When Dr. Sykes first undertook to oppose Dr. *Waterland* in this matter, it is probable he did not foresee, that he should be obliged to own, that the Articles in question were *evidently Calvinistical*. His arguments, in his first pamphlet, go upon the supposition, that the sense of the Articles is not fixed; which is only saying in other words, that the meaning of the compilers is not known. And to keep matters under such uncertainty, for purposes now very well understood, seems to have been the view of the King's Declaration.

<sup>a</sup> *Reply*, p. 15.

U 4

But

But the Doctor, by acknowledging the sense of certain Articles to be originally *Calvinistical*, has, with respect to *those* Articles, deprived himself of the privilege he might otherwise pretend to derive from the Declaration; namely, of subscribing them in an *Arminian* sense. The Declaration supposes the Articles to be drawn up in general words, which favour *no side*. Allow that the Articles were originally drawn up to favour *one* side, and what use can you make of the Declaration? Or what refuge for *various* senses can you find under *that*?

For my own part, I cannot but think that an honest man must have some struggles with himself, before he can bring himself to give a sense to words, which *he knows* they were never meant to bear; and especially when those words are the words of a covenant, importing some kind of security given to the public, by assenting to them.

And yet certain it is, that some very good and worthy men, by virtue of a certain sort of casuistry, have reconciled themselves to this practice, to avoid some present inconveniences grievous to flesh and blood. And, having met with a remarkable instance of this in the course of my inquiries into this subject, I shall now lay it before the reader, the rather as, from a certain resemblance in the features, I am persuaded, that our modern Casuistry is, in a great measure, derived from this great exemplar.

It

It has been already observed, that some of the ancient Puritans in King *James's* time refused to subscribe the Articles, upon the supposition that the *purpose*, if not the *doctrine* of the church, was changed from what it had been. When *Arminianism* came to be more openly avowed by the Bishops, and supported by King *Charles's* Injunctions, &c. the same people were in still greater distress, not knowing what use might be made of their subscriptions, as they were taken in the canonical form, which admitted of no reserve or limitation whatever; and it does not appear, that the subtleties of our modern casuistry had *then* been found out.

But these same Puritans having, by opposing these attempts of their adversaries with spirit and vigour, got the upper hand, it came to their turn to impose terms and conditions upon those, who had formerly put the like hardships upon them.

This occasioned a great demand among the Royalists for casuistical Divinity, and *salvoes* of several kinds; in which mystical science, the most eminent adept was Dr. *Robert Sanderfon*, afterwards Bishop of *Lincoln*. A venerable character, which has descended, with much estimation, even to the present times; insomuch that, I suppose, few people, who should fall into any of those dilemmas, from which he provided *ways to escape*, would scruple to abide by his judgment.

Among

### 300 THE CONFESSIONAL

Among other cases of different kinds, a question was put to this able Casuist, whether a Royalist, who had taken the oath of allegiance to King Charles I, might conscientiously take the *Engagement*, enjoined by the Parliament in the year 1650, which ran in these words :

*I A. B. do promise, that I will be true and faithful to the Commonwealth of England, as it is now established without King or Lords?*

But, before we take a view of this learned Doctor's sentiments on this subject, it will be proper to look back a few years, to another transaction, wherein this same Dr. *Sanderfon* had a principal share.

In the year 1646-47, the Parliament determined to visit the university of *Oxford*, by a committee of their own house. "But before the visitation could take place, the Vice-chancellor, "Dr. *Fell*, summoned the Convocation [*June 1.*] "wherein it was agreed, not to submit to the "Parliament-visitors. A paper of reasons against "the *Covenant*, the *Negative-oath*, and the *Director*, drawn up chiefly by Dr. *Sanderfon*, was "also consented to, and ordered to be published "to the world, both in Latin and English, — "under the title of *Reasons of the present Judgment of the University of OXFORD, &c.*"

Under the head, *Of the Salvos for taking the Covenant*, Dr. *Sanderfon* expresses the sense of the

<sup>1</sup> *Neale's Hist. of the Puritans*, 8vo, vol. III. p. 434.



university, and consequently his own, in the following terms.

(1.) "It has been said, that *we take it* [the Covenant] *in our own sense*. But this we apprehend, contrary to the nature and end of an oath; contrary to the end of speech; contrary to the *design* of the covenant; and contrary to the solemn confession at the conclusion of it, (*viz.*) that we shall take it with a true intention to perform the same, as we shall answer it to the Searcher of all hearts at the great day.

"Besides, this would be *jesuitical*; it would be taking the name of God in vain; and it would strengthen the objection of those who say, there is no faith to be given to Protestants.

(2.) "It has been said, we may take the covenant with these salvoes expressed, *So far as lawfully I may: — As it is agreeable to the word of God, and the laws of the land; — Saving all oaths by me formerly taken, &c.* which is no better than vile hypocrisy; for, by the same rule, one may subscribe to the council of *Trent*, or the Turkish *Alcoran*."

Thus judged the learned Dr. *Sanderfon* in the year 1647. There are some other qualifying particulars mentioned in this rescript, which may be seen at full length in *Neale's History*. These are sufficient for my present purpose; and very naturally suggest the following remarks.

Either

Either the Parliament visitors would have allowed of these *salvoes*, or they would not. If they would not, for what purpose are they brought in here? unless it be to condemn some of the royal party who had made use of them. And so far they are right, for this was no better than downright prevarication.

If the parliament would have allowed of, or connived at, these *salvoes* (as I think the *Oxfordmen* took it for granted) we see here was the *mens imponentis*, the tacit consent, at least, of the imposers, on the side of those who took it with these reserves. And yet we find these casuists were not for making use of this indulgence, because contrary to the plain and express words, as well as the design of the covenant. They accordingly condemn the practice as *jesuitical*, full of vile hypocrisy, perverting the nature and end of an oath, abusing the end of speech, and highly scandalous to the Protestant name.

Let us now see how the same Dr. *Sanderfon* satisfied his querist, concerning taking the *Engagement*, in the year 1650, and how consistent he was with his own judgment four years before.

He begins with laying it down as a fact, "that  
 " all expressions by words, are subject to such  
 " ambiguities, that scarce any thing can be said  
 " or expressed in *any* words, how cautelously so-  
 " ever chosen, which will not render the whole  
 " subject

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 303

“subject capable of more constructions than  
“one.”

According to this maxim, the *Covenant*, which was ten times as long, at least, as the *Engagement*, must be capable of still more constructions. And yet Dr. *Sanderfon* could see plainly and clearly in to the *Design* of that. — He lays it down,

2. “Where one construction binds to more, another to less, the true sense is to be fixed by the intention of the imposer. For that all promises and assurances, wherein faith is required to be given to another, ought to be understood *ad mentem imponentis*, according to the mind and meaning of him to whom the faith is given, so far forth as the meaning may reasonably appear.”

Now surely no man’s mind and meaning may more reasonably, or so reasonably, appear in any other way, as by his own personal positive explanation of it. The short and true answer then to the question had been, “If you are under

\* *Nine Cases of Conscience*, p. 94. Archbishop Tillotson hath said much the same thing. “It is plainly impossible, that any thing should be delivered in such clear and certain words, as to be absolutely incapable of any other sense.” — But then he adds, — “And yet, notwithstanding this, the meaning of them may be so plain, that any *unprejudiced* and *reasonable* man may certainly understand them.” *Preface* to his sermons, octavo, 1743, p. 15. Which seems to have been sufficiently the case with the *Engagement*, to have excused Dr. *Sanderfon* the pains he hath taken with it.

“any

# 364 THE CONFESSIONAL.

"any uncertainty, concerning the meaning of  
 "any expressions in the *Engagement*, consult the  
 "Imposers, and govern yourself by their inter-  
 "pretation." Cases might have happened, where  
 the intention of the imposer was doubtful, and  
 where the Imposer himself could not be come at.  
 In the present instance the Imposers were living,  
 easily found, and capable of explaining their own  
 meaning with the greatest precision.

But probably *these* Imposers would not have  
 answered the *Querist's* end so well as Dr. *Sander-*  
*son*, who goes on,

3. ——— "Reasonably appear, I mean, by the  
 "nature of the matter about which it is convers-  
 "ant, and such signification of the words where-  
 "in it is expressed, as, according to the ordinary  
 "use of speech among men, agreeth best there-  
 "to."

But if the mind and meaning of the imposer  
*reasonably* appears by the nature of the subject,  
 and by the ordinary signification of the words  
 wherein it is expressed, then it *sufficiently* appears.  
 There is no pretence left, in such a case, for  
 doubt or ambiguity. The question does not con-  
 cern such a case; but those cases only, wherein  
 the mind of the Imposer does *not* sufficiently ap-  
 pear. And here, conscience and good faith re-  
 quire, that you should consult the Imposer him-  
 self, if he may be found.—"You are mistaken,  
 "says the Casuist, for,



4. " If the intention of the imposer be not so  
 " fully declared by the words and the nature of  
 " the business, but that the same words may, in  
 " fair construction, be still capable of a double  
 " meaning, so as, taken in one sense, they shall  
 " bind to *more*, and in another to *less*, I conceive  
 " it is not necessary, nor always expedient (but  
 " rather, for the most part, otherwise) for the  
 " promiser, before he give [his] faith, to demand  
 " of the imposer, whether of the two is his mean-  
 " ing? But he may, *by the rule of prudence*, and  
 " that (for ought I see) without the violation of  
 " any law of his conscience, make his *just* advan-  
 " tage of that ambiguity, and take it in the same  
 " sense which shall bind him to the *less*."

This looks extremely like a contradiction to what went before, namely, that " all promises, &c. *ought* to be understood *ad mentem imponentis*." But dextrous casuists can extricate themselves out of much more considerable difficulties. Observe how nimbly the Doctor comes off here.

" Since the faith to be given, is intended to  
 " the behoof of him to whom it is given, it con-  
 " cerneth him to take care, that his meaning be  
 " expressed in such words, as will sufficiently  
 " manifest the same to the understanding of a  
 " reasonable man. Which if he neglect to do,  
 " no law of equity or prudence bindeth the pro-  
 " miser, by an over-scrupulous diligence, to make  
 " it

"it out, whereby to lay a greater obligation  
 "upon himself, than he need to do."

But here the Doctor is met full in the face by another of his principles, which is, that "scarce  
 "any thing can be expressed in any words, *how*  
 "*cautelously soever chosen*, which will not admit  
 "of more constructions than one."—— So that, after the utmost *care* and *caution* the imposer could possibly take, his meaning might be dubious to a reasonable man, and much more to a *prejudiced* Querist, and a *willing* Casuist, as will more particularly appear, now that we attend the learned Doctor, in the application of his principles to the *Engagement*.

"In which, our Casuist says, there are fundry  
 "ambiguities.

1. "The words *true* and *faithful*, may intend,  
 "either *fidelity* and *allegiance* to be performed to  
 "the powers in possession, as their right and  
 "due; or such a kind of *fidelity* as captives taken  
 "in war promise to their enemies, &c.

2. "By the word *Commonwealth*, may either  
 "be meant—the *prevalent party*—now possessed  
 "of, and exercising, supreme power, in this King-  
 "dom: Or else the *whole entire body of the Eng-*  
 "*lish nation*, as it is a civil society, or state with-  
 "in itself, distinguished from all other foreign  
 "states.

3. "The word *establiſhed*, may ſignify the  
 " *establiſhment* of the preſent form of Govern-  
 " ment, either *de jure*, or *de facto*, &c."

Out of theſe diſtinctions he works the two fol-  
 lowing ſenſes of the engagement.

"I acknowledge the ſovereign power in this  
 " nation, whereunto I owe allegiance and ſub-  
 " jection, to be rightly ſtated in the Houſe of  
 " Commons, wherein neither King nor Lords  
 " (as ſuch) have, or henceforth ought to have,  
 " any ſhare. And I promiſe, that I will per-  
 " form all allegiance and ſubjection thereunto;  
 " and maintain the ſame with my fortunes and  
 " my life, to the utmoſt of my power."

They who know the hiſtory of thoſe times,  
 and the occaſion of the *Engagement*, can entertain  
 no doubt but this was the natural meaning of  
 this ſecurity, and will therein ſee a manifeſt  
 reaſon why Dr. *Sanderſon* would not ſend his  
 Queriſt to the Impoſers for a reſolution of his  
 doubts: eſpecially as, by his quibbles, he could,  
 for his ſatiſfaction, ſqueeze the following ſenſe  
 out of the ſame words of the Engagement.

"Whereas, *for the preſent*, the ſupreme power  
 " in England is *actually poſſeſſed* and *exerciſed* by  
 " the Houſe of Commons, without either King  
 " or Lords; I promiſe that, *ſo long as I live under*  
 " *that power and protection*, I will not contrive or  
 " attempt any act of hoſtility againſt them; but,  
 X " living

308 THE CONFESSIONAL.

"living quietly and peaceably under them, will  
 "endeavour myself, *faithfully, in my place and*  
 "*calling, to do, what every good member of a com-*  
 "*monwealth ought to do, for the safety of my coun-*  
 "*try, and preservation of civil society therein."*

After which follow some arguments tending to prove, that this latter was *more probably* the sense of the Imposers, than the other; which can be looked upon in no better light than of an attempt to insult the common sense of all mankind.

In the beginning of this case of conscience, the learned Doctor offers something, by way of shewing, that the *Solemn League and Covenant*, being expressly contrary to the oaths of allegiance, was not lawfully to be taken by any man who had taken such oaths, or was persuaded such allegiance was due. Which he seems to have mentioned, lest his *Oxford-divinity* upon the *Covenant* should be applied to the case of the *Engagement*. The difference between the two cases, however, consists singly and solely in these *probabilities* he mentions, that the framers of the *Engagement* intended this *lower sense*, which no doubt he thought to be consistent with the Querist's allegiance to *K. Charles*. And indeed not without reason, since, without all dispute, both the *Casuists* and the *Querists* principles led them to believe, that *every good member of the commonwealth ought, in his place and calling, to contribute all in his*  
 power



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 309

power to the restoration of K. Charles, and that for the safety of his country, and the preservation of civil society therein. No one can doubt of this, who knows that it was this same Dr. Sanderfon who declared, it was not lawful to resist the Prince upon the throne, even to save all the souls in the whole world.

But did Dr. Sanderfon really think that the powers then in being were such fools and triflers, as *probably to intend* to put no other but his *lower sense* upon the Engagement, or indeed to allow of *that* sense at all? — It is too evident for his credit, from his own words in this very tract, that he did not. For he intreats his correspondent to take care, that no copies of his paper should get abroad, “Lest the potent party,” says he, “in consideration of some things therein hinted, might think the words of the *Engagement too light*, and might thence take occasion to lay some heavier obligation upon the Royalists, in words that would oblige to *more*.”

Could the *Casuiſt* have entertained any suspicions of this sort, had he really and sincerely thought the *lower construction* was the sense intended by the potent party?

He concludes his case thus: “If any man, out of these considerations, rather than suffer extreme prejudice to his person, estate, or necessary relations, shall subscribe the *Engagement*, [in that sense which binds to *less*] since his

### 310 THE CONFESSIONAL.

"own heart condemneth him not," [and that it might not, he, good man, had taken no ordinary pains] "neither do I."

Who shall now be saucy enough to say, there is no faith to be given to Protestants?

"Many, without doubt," says Dr. *Waterland*, "have been guilty of prevaricating with state oaths; but nobody has yet been found sanguine enough to undertake the defence of it in print <sup>h</sup>."

This case of conscience, however, was in print before *Waterland* was born; and what is more, he *knew* it was. One may charitably hope, indeed, he did not suspect it of defending prevarication, otherwise he would hardly have recommended these *Nine Cases of Conscience*, in his *Advice to young Students*. What notion had Dr. *W.* of defending prevarication? He has told us, in the period immediately preceding the last citation, "It is defending a fraudulent subscription upon principle, by rules of art." Substitute a *civil* in the place of an *ecclesiastical* subscription, and you have a true character of *Sanderfon's* performance.

I cannot avoid remarking in this place the similarity of the two cases for which *His Majesty's Declaration*, and this *Dispensation of Sanderfon's* were respectively contrived.

<sup>h</sup> Case of *Arian* Subscription, p. 4.

James

*James I.* (or, if you will, *Charles I.*) wanted the assistance of the high-flying *Arminians*. But that he could not have, till, by subscription, they had qualified themselves for preferments in the church: and subscribe they *decently* could not, till the Articles were some way *accommodated* to their notions. This was effected by the *Declaration*.

*Charles II.*, then in exile, wanted the aid of the Cavaliers and Presbyterians, and this he could not have, till they had equipped themselves for posts of trust and power; and to these they must pass through the *Engagement*, which, in its obvious meaning, would not go down with numbers of them<sup>1</sup>. *Dr. Sanderfon* himself insinuates,

<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterians, if we may believe *Dr. Calamy*, were more scrupulous about taking the *Engagement*, than the Episcopalian. The famous *Mr. Richard Vines* was, for refusing that security, put out of the Headship of *Pembroke Hall* in *Cambridge*, as was *Dr. Rainbow* at another college in the same university. *Dr. Reynolds* forfeited the Deanry of *Christ Church Oxford*, on the same account, *Abridgment*, 62, 63. *Mr. Baxter*, we are told, *ib.* p. 164. dissuaded men from taking it, wrote against the taking it, and declared to those who were for putting quibbling constructions on it, that, "the subject's allegiance, or fidelity to his rulers, could not be acknowledged and given in plainer words." *Bishop Sanderfon* hints at these scruples of the Presbyterians, in this very tract, p. 94. concluding however, that, "for his own part, when we speak of learning and conscience, he holds most of the Presbyterians to be very little considerable." What would not a man say to serve a cause, bad or good, that could say this? But let us not forget the excellent *Dr. Isaac Barrow* on this occasion, who,

### 312 THE CONFESSIONAL.

that this *temporizing* was neither unknown to, nor disapproved by the King. And, to encourage it the more, tells the Querist, that, “whensoever the present force was so removed from the taker [of the *Engagement*], or he from under it, as that he should have power to act according to his allegiance, the obligation would of itself determine and expire.” A sort of doctrine that seems rather to have been born and bred at *Liege* or *St. Omer’s* than at *Oxford*.

One word with the Doctors *Sykes* and *Sander-son* together, and I have done.

Dr. *Sykes* lays great stress upon this circumstance, *viz.* that the church of *England*, being a Protestant church; cannot consistently obtrude her own interpretations of scripture upon her members, so as to supersede or over-rule the right of private judgment, or the liberty every one has to interpret for himself. “What-ever authority,” says he, “the church may claim, [he should have added, or exercise] it must still be subservient to the right of interpreting scripture for one’s self; or else the exhorting men to study the scriptures, is just such a banter and ridicule, as it would be seriously

“when the *Engagement* was imposed, subscribed it; but, upon second thoughts, repenting of what he had done, he applied himself to the commissioners, declared his dissatisfaction, and prevailed to have his name razed out of the list.” *Biogr. Brit.* in Article *BARROW*, *Text*.—Most people will think *Barrow* as good a casuist as *Sander-son*.

“ to



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 313

"to command one to see clearly and distinctly  
 "any object, and at the same time to put false  
 "spectacles before our eyes <sup>k</sup>."

Let us put this into political language. "We  
 "must still preserve our *allegiance* to the scri-  
 "ptures, notwithstanding our submitting to the  
 "claims of the church *de facto*, which seem to be  
 "inconsistent with it. The church herself ac-  
 "knowledges the right of the scriptures *de jure*;  
 "and therefore, if she challenges such an alle-  
 "giance from us *de facto*, as contravenes our alle-  
 "giance to the scriptures" — what then? — The  
 premisses certainly lead us to conclude — "We  
 "must not comply with her, notwithstanding her  
 "*pretences* of acknowledging the sovereign au-  
 "thority of the scriptures." — Instead of that,  
 Dr. Sykes only concludes — "She must then be  
 "inconsistent with herself." — As if it was im-  
 possible for the church of *England* to be inconsis-  
 tent with herself! The question is, whether the  
 church of *England* does not, by her authority *de*  
*facto*, supersede the *allegiance* which she professes  
 to be due to the scriptures *de jure*, by requiring  
 subscriptions to her own interpretations? And if  
 she does, what ought a conscientious man to do  
 in such a case? — As little as I am in love with  
 Bishop *Sanderfon's* Theology, I will venture to  
 leave *this* point to his decision, who, in a case  
 exactly parallel, determines as follows.

<sup>k</sup> Reply to *Waterland's* supplement, p. 26.

" The taking of the late *Solemn League and Co-*  
 " *venant*, by any subject of *England* (notwithstand-  
 " ing the protestation in the preface, that there-  
 " in *he had the honour of the King before his eyes* ;  
 " and that express clause in one of the articles of  
 " it, wherein he swore, *The preservation of the*  
 " *King's person and honour*) was an act as clear  
 " contrary to the oath of allegiance, and the natu-  
 " ral duty of every subject of *England* ; as the  
 " assisting of the King to the utmost of one's power ;  
 " (which is a branch of the oaths) and the assist-  
 " ing against any person whatsoever, with his ut-  
 " most power, those who were actually in arms  
 " against the King. (which was the very end for  
 " which that Covenant was set on foot) are con-  
 " trary the one to the other <sup>1</sup>."

The Doctor has expressed himself awkwardly  
 enough ; but his sentiment is plain, and his in-  
 ference unavoidable. " Therefore, no subject of  
 " *England*, who desired to preserve his allegiance  
 " to King *Charles I.*, could conscientiously take  
 " the *Solemn League and Covenant*, notwithstand-  
 " ing the saving clauses therein expressed." Let  
 the reader make the application.

I am heartily sorry that I cannot derive the  
 practice of our subscribing the xxxix Articles,  
 with a *latitude*, from a more respectable origin  
 than these foregoing precedents. Every man  
 however, has the same right that I have of judg-

<sup>1</sup> *Nim Cases*, p. 92, 93.

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 315

ing for himself. And I pretend to no more in this collection of facts, than to assist those to whom the subject is of importance, to form their own sentiments upon it, with precision and impartiality. There will still be numbers among us, who will continue to subscribe, and continue likewise to *care for none of these things*. Such as these, perhaps, care not for matters of more consequence; which indeed, I should apprehend to be the case with the most of those, who can bring themselves to give a security of this kind to the church, and to the publick, without a previous examination, to what the nature and circumstances of so solemn an act do in reality amount.

CHAP.

## 316 THE CONFESSIONAL.

### CHAP. VIII.

#### *Concerning the Conclusions that arise from the foregoing Disquisitions.*

**I**T is now time to sum up the account, and to consider to what it amounts. A detail of facts, exhibiting all this contrariety of sentiments, all this confusion and uncertainty, with respect to the case of subscribing our established forms, would be of little use, if some consequences might not be drawn from it, tending to lead us out of the labyrinth, and suggesting some means of putting the matter upon a more edifying footing.

I have not, willingly and knowingly, misrepresented any thing, in stating the several cases that have come under consideration. I have cited authorities fairly and candidly, and have not, to my knowledge, suppressed any thing that might shew them to the best advantage. But if any one should think there is a partial bias in the reflexions I have occasionally made upon particular passages, I will readily give them up upon competent proof of such obliquity, and abide by the conclusions, which any man of common honesty and common sense shall think fit to draw from this perplexity and contradiction among so many learned writers, who, on other occasions, acquit themselves



themselves with sufficient clearness and consistency.

Such a one, I presume, will make no difficulty to acknowledge, that, in this matter of subscription at least, a reformation is devoutly to be wished. The Bishops *Burnet* and *Clayton*, the Doctors *Clarke*, *Sykes*, and others, confess it, and call for it. And though such writers as Bishop *Conybeare*, and the Doctors *Nicholls*, *Bennet*, *Waterland*, *Stebbing*, &c. the heroes of our fifth chapter, neither allow the expedience of such reformation, nor would have endured any proposals of that kind without a strenuous opposition, yet their own writings on the subject, when compared together, are more than a thousand advocates for it; if it were only for the sake of taking away the offence and scandal, arising from the supposed occasion the church of *England* has to employ such a set of party-coloured Casuists.

Indeed an unlimited latitude of interpretation, allowing every subscriber of the Articles to abound in his own sense, tends, in a great measure, to supersede the necessity for a revision of our present system, as supposing that men of different opinions may very well acquiesce in it as it is. This is what Bishop *Burnet*, Dr. *Clarke*, and the writers of that complexion, contend for, and in so doing, furnish their adversaries with an answer out of their own mouths, whenever they plead for a reformation; a term which supposes and im-

plies

plies that things are in such a state, as honest and conscientious subscribers *cannot* acquiesce in.

Of late, indeed, the necessity for a reformation in *this*, as well as in other articles of our ecclesiastical establishment, has been acknowledged by unprejudiced and conscientious men of different persuasions. And even they who dread it on private and personal considerations, when they think fit to appear in opposition to any proposals tending that way, betray the most manifest tokens of conviction, that a reformation would be a right measure in itself; and therefore set themselves to shew, that a reformation is rather *impracticable*, than *unnecessary*; of which I shall presently give some remarkable instances.

Let us then proceed to consider the force of the arguments against a reformation, drawn from the *impracticability* of it; taking along with us the concession, that a reformation is expedient and desirable.

The question, with which this inquiry naturally opens, is, By whom should a reformation in our ecclesiastical affairs be first attempted?

And here I take it for granted, that all sides will be unanimous in their answer: namely, by the Bishops, and other pious and learned divines, who, by the course of their education and studies, and their intercourse with clergymen of all capacities and dispositions, may well be supposed to have the clearest conception both of what is  
amiss,

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 319

amiss, and of the most effectual methods to bring things into order.

Here the only difficulty to be apprehended is, that, the Bishops having no authority to undertake any thing of this sort of themselves, recourse must be had to the higher powers, first for leave or license to make a proper examination into the particulars that may want to be reformed, and afterwards to give a legal sanction to such alterations as may be found necessary. And there may perhaps be some doubt made, whether my Lords the Bishops would succeed in applying to the Crown for the powers necessary for such an undertaking, or to the Legislature for their authorising such a reform, as their Lordships and their assistants might think requisite.

Now for any such objection as this I apprehend there is not the least room, till such application has actually been made and rejected. Have our Bishops and great churchmen ever made the trial? Have they been disappointed in the event of it?

I will venture to answer both these questions in the negative: and will support my opinion by a witness worthy of all credit.

"I have been credibly informed, says this deponent, his Majesty \* has sometimes said to a late great prelate, when paying his duty at court, — *Is there any thing, my Lord, you would*

\* King GEORGE II.

*have*

"have me do for the church of England? If there  
 "is, let me know it. And he, continues this  
 "writer, who of his own motion will say this,  
 "cannot receive otherwise than graciously, any  
 "petition for leave and opportunity to his clergy,  
 "to consult together for its good, [Qu. *whose*  
 "*good, or the good of what, the church, or the*  
 "clergy?] if it be made with decency and pro-  
 "priety <sup>b</sup>."

Upon this fact I rest the evidence, that no ap-  
 plication has been made to the throne, on the be-  
 half of reforming the church of *England*; and  
 that, if our Bishops had applied, their petition  
 would not have been rejected.

The patrons of the present ecclesiastical system,  
 therefore, put the *impracticability* of a reforma-  
 tion upon the people, with whom they can use  
 more freedom. They tell us, the *times* are not  
 ripe for reformation. The English of which is,  
 that the temper and manners of our people are  
 not in a condition to be reformed.

Hear how the same *free and impartial considerer*  
 I have just now quoted, sets forth the *unripeness*  
 of the present times in this respect.

"The gross body of the people are weak, ig-  
 "norant, injudicious, capricious, factious, head-  
 "strong, self-willed, and self-sufficient, and never  
 "less disposed than at this time to acquiesce in

<sup>b</sup> Free and Impartial Considerations on the *Free and Candid*  
*Disquisitions, &c.* p. 56. printed for Baldwin 1751. The author  
 of which is now known to be the Rev. JOHN WHITE, B. D.

"the



" the wisdom, and submit themselves to the deci-  
 " sions of their superiors, nor ever more impatient  
 " to be driven from their old habits, and put out  
 " of their way in the offices, or any other matters  
 " of religion; especially those which they them-  
 " selves are to practise, and have a personal con-  
 " cern in. *This is now grown to be the general*  
 " *temper of the people.* I don't call it their bigotry.  
 " No; 'tis a spirit of mutiny and independence.  
 " And this, I think, you must allow, is still in-  
 " creasing, as much as you or I can pretend the  
 " other is decreasing among us<sup>c</sup>."

I would not have cited this passage in proof of  
 what I have advanced, but that the author of it  
 gives broad hints that he wrote *permissu superio-*  
*rum*. " Some things he omitted by the advice of  
 " those whose judgment he greatly *reverences*, and  
 " cannot allow himself *in any thing* to differ from."  
 These must be his ecclesiastical superiors, since,  
 in some or other of his books, he hath *allowed*  
*himself to differ* from men of almost all other  
 denominations, who pretend to be judges of such  
 things. He speaks as if he had conferred upon  
 the subject of alterations " with a person in high  
 " station," p. 63. In another place he says,  
 " nay, I am satisfied we shall not stand with  
 " them [the Dissenters] for half a dozen things of  
 " the like nature [as the cross in baptism] upon  
 " so good and valuable a consideration, as their  
 " coming in and embracing the communion of

<sup>c</sup> Free and impartial Considerations, &c. p. 7, 8.

" the

"the church<sup>d</sup>." No man, one would think, at least no such man as Mr. *White*, would venture to answer for my Lords the Bishops, in so public a manner, and upon so nice a point, without some assurance that they would not disown him; should the matter be brought to a trial. I conclude, therefore, that this paragraph is agreeable to the sentiments of those great churchmen who supervised Mr. *White's* pamphlet; otherwise it certainly should have been omitted, as some other things were, by the advice of his friend or friends in high station. But let us now proceed to consider the case it exhibits.

We have here the general temper of the gross body of a Christian people described in terms, which, with the addition of one or two epithets, would perfectly characterize the inhabitants of a *Pandæmonium*. Bigotry, or a blind attachment to religious prejudices, would have afforded some excuse for these wretches. Misled by the superstition of ignorant parents, or imposed upon by the wiles of crafty teachers, the fault might not have been wholly their own, that they were not more tractable and submissive to proper authority. But this would have thrown part of their guilt where Mr. *White* did not want to have it thrown. They are therefore deprived of the benefit of this plea, and their depravity ascribed to a factious headstrong spirit of their own; an in-born malignity of heart, one would think, near

\* Free and impartial Considerations, &c. p. 7, 8.

akin to that of the *spirits who kept not their first estate*, and equally incurable.

And yet, when this *free and impartial* Considerer comes to be cross-examined upon this accusation, we shall find such evident tokens of disingenuity, as discover that his testimony was not founded merely on the love of truth. For, in the first place, who can these *superiors* be, in whose wisdom this mutinous people refuse to acquiesce, and to whose judgment they will not submit? Not their *ecclesiastical* superiors, we may be sure; since Mr. *White* has told us in this same pamphlet, that this very people, capricious, factious, headstrong, &c. as he has represented them, *have some respect for their spiritual guides and governors*; and *sense* enough, with all their weakness, ignorance, and want of judgment, "to perceive that those who are led by their office to think continually on those things which concern religion, are more likely to judge rightly of them, than any *lay-assembly* whatever," p. 2.

The result is then, that this spirit of mutiny would only be exerted against the *lay-superiors* of this headstrong people. But how does this appear, or what foundation in the present case is there for any such apprehension? When have our *lay-superiors* attempted, within Mr. *White's* memory, "to drive us from our old habits, or put us out of our way, in the offices, or any other matters of religion, especially those which we ourselves are to practise, and have a person-

“al concern in?” For my own part, I can recollect but one instance, the late alteration of the style, which gave offence, as I have heard, to some elderly females, by displacing, as they thought, some of their darling festivals, particularly *Christmas-day*. For the rest, so far as this instance is in point, nothing can be more unlucky for Mr. *White* and the cause he is supporting. It is an incident that hath happened since his pamphlet was published. And the general acquiescence of our people in this new law, shews sufficiently, that they are not so very tenacious of their old habits against sense and reason, as he would have it believed, and that he had rashly and unreasonably calumniated his countrymen.

The plain truth is, this gentleman was only dressing up a scarecrow, to deter a certain lay-assembly from taking matters of reformation out of the hands of the clergy, into their own, of which he every where betrays the most abject fears.

In the paroxysms of such panics, it is usual for the party affected, to catch up the first weapon that falls in his way, and to deal his blows with so unsteady an hand, and so undiscerning an eye, as oftentimes to maim or bruise a friend, instead of an enemy. So hath it happened to this valiant champion on the present occasion.

He hath drawn so detestable a picture of the common people, that it may very well frighten any assembly of men in their wits, from meddling with



with them in *any* province, civil or religious. But is it not natural to ask, how came our countrymen into this degenerate state? There have been times, when they were more reasonable and condescending to the wisdom of their superiors. How come they, particularly, to be so weak, ignorant, and injudicious in *religious* matters? Does not this representation carry with it some reflection on those who should have taught them better? And who should these be, but the appointed teachers of religion? The Bishops and Pastors of the church, who receive some millions annually as a consideration for their watching for the souls of the people, and particularly for instilling into them Christian knowledge, and Christian principles?

Take the matter as Mr. *White* hath exhibited it, and you can perceive no trace of any due pains taken with them this way. If there is any appearance in his book that their ecclesiastical superiors have taught them any thing, it is only that sort of *sense* which leads to *some respect* for themselves, while they have suffered them to act and think with respect to their civil governors, whatever their unruly, headstrong wills and affections may suggest to them: and will it not be said, that the clergy may perhaps foment this spirit of faction and independence, towards their lay-superiors, the better to secure the dependence of this headstrong multitude upon themselves?

In my opinion, Mr. *White's* friends in *high stations* could not have pitched upon a worse advocate to plead their cause than himself. It might have been said on the behalf of the clergy of the present generation at least, that the people were corrupted before they came into their hands; — that these extreme degrees of degeneracy, cannot be supposed to have been contracted in the compass of a few years — that our present Bishops and Pastors were obliged to take the people as they found them — but that they were using their utmost endeavours to correct their principles, and meliorate their habits, and had reason to hope for success in due time.

But Mr. *White*, by alleging that this licentious spirit of the people is *still encreasing*, leaves room to believe, that the present generation of religious pastors are just as negligent of their charge as their predecessors.

But to leave this gentleman a while to himself, I could never persuade myself that the argument in defence of the Christian clergy, drawn from the nature of the times they lived in, however it may have been managed, is of any sort of weight. An enterprising genius of the present age seems to have made the most of it, in a late attempt to restore the Fathers so called, to some part of the credit they had lost under the examination of *Daille, Whitby, Barbeyrac, Middleton,* and

and others <sup>d</sup>. And how has he succeeded? Has he shewn, in opposition to the charges brought against them by these writers, that they were judicious critics and interpreters of holy writ; accurate reasoners; sound moralists; consistent and conscientious casuists; or even credible witnesses to matters of fact? By no means. His defence of them is founded upon the concession, that they were defective in all these articles, not through their own fault, but the error of the times. On this head this ingenious writer takes great pains to shew, by a long induction of particulars, how learning and science were abused, corrupted, and diverted from the purpose, either of discovering or maintaining the truth, in the different schools and sects of pagan orators, sophists, and philosophers. Among these, it seems, the Fathers had their first rudiments, and the fashion of the times keeping up the reputation of these depraved methods of reasoning, &c. the fathers were obliged to deal with their pagan rivals in their own way, and to play their own sophistry and prevarication upon them in their turn.

Is it possible this acute writer should impose this state of the case upon himself, or hope to impose it upon his readers, for a full justification of the Fathers? For to what does all this learned harangue amount, but to this, that the Fathers, instead of reforming, were themselves corrupted by the men and the times they lived in?

<sup>d</sup> Warburton's *Julian*, Introduction.



### 328 THE CONFSSIONAL.

If the times had not been faulty, there had been no occasion for the Fathers to mend them. And, as they undertook this province, it is but reasonable to suppose they had means and expedients in their hands, adequate to the discharge of it. These means and expedients, they themselves confess, were the holy scriptures, from whence they might have been furnished with all necessary truths, as well as with the methods of inculcating them in *simplicity* and *godly sincerity*, without having recourse to *the enticing words of man's wisdom*. Who gave them a commission to model the truths of the Gospel to the taste of a licentious and corrupt world? or to subtilize the plain doctrines of Christ and his Apostles, by the chemistry of the reigning philosophy? I do not know, indeed, that the Fathers pretended to any such authority. But if they did, we, who have in our hands the only authentic commission they had to teach, and the exemplification of it in the practice of the Apostles, have no occasion to believe them.

The memorable Mr. *Hales* of *Eton*, who saw as much of *the right use of the Fathers*, and as soon, as Mr. *Daillé* himself, and perhaps had full as much candor, with respect to the allowances that ought to be made on account of their situation in the world, was well aware of the apology that this learned Doctor has made for them; but however seems to have paid little regard to its merit.

Arch.



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 329

Archbishop *Laud*, offended at the freedoms *Hales* had taken with church-authority and tradition, in his tract concerning *Schism*, put the honest man to his purgation, which he underwent with a degree of courage, decency, and good sense, that would have done him honour, had he left nothing behind him but that single letter to *Laud*.

"I am thought," says this excellent person, "to have been too sharp in censuring *antiquity*, beyond the good respect which is due unto it; In this point, my error, if any be, sprang from this, that, taking *actions* to be the fruit by which men are to be judged, I judged of the *persons* by their *actions*, and not of *actions* by the *persons* from whom they proceeded. For to judge of *actions* by PERSONS and TIMES, I have always taken to be MOST UNNATURAL."

\* See Mr. *Hales's* Letter to Archbishop *Laud*, usually printed at the end of Bishop *Hare's* *Difficulties and Discouragements*, &c. The Tract concerning *Schism* was written in the year 1636, and this apologetical Letter very soon after; which I mention on account of a passage in it, that carries with it a very strong presumption, that the first clause in our twentieth Article, concerning *Church-Authority*, was not at that time held for authentic. The passage I mean is this: "I count in point of decision of *Church-questions*, if I say of the *Authority of the Church*, that it was none; I know no adversary I have, the church of *Rome* only excepted. For this cannot be true, except we make the church judge of controversies; the contrary to which we generally maintain against that church." Would *Hales* have said this, and said it too to such a man as *Laud*, if he might have been confronted with an authentic

Whether the authority of Mr. Hales, with so sensible a consideration to support it, should not

book of Articles? About three years before, viz. in 1633, the authenticity of this first clause of the 20th Article had been publicly debated in the Divinity-schools at Oxford, upon occasion of Peter Heylin's disputing for his Doctor's degree, Prideaux, the Professor, read the Latin Article out of the *Corpus Confessionum*, published at Geneva, 1612, without the clause. Heylin objecting to this authority, sent a Friend [one Westly] to a neighbouring bookseller's, who furnished him with an English copy of the Articles, with the disputed clause, which he read aloud, and then delivered to the bystanders to satisfy themselves. This, it seems, had the desired effect. But, as the author of the *Historical and Critical Essay on the thirty-nine Articles* observes, with very little reason: "For," saith he, "the English Edition produced, which was, in all probability, the late Edition set forth with the King's Declaration, seems very improper to determine the controversy by, when the question related to the Latin Articles. If any Latin copy of the Articles, printed by authority, had been brought into the schools, the auditory must have been satisfied of the contrary, if they had judged of the authority of the clause by a printed copy of the Articles." *Intrqd.* p. 28. Upon this fact, I shall take the liberty to make a few remarks. 1. There is no evidence of this victory but Heylin's own. *Examen Historicum*, 1st Appendix, p. 217. Unless you will believe the compiler of Heylin's article in the *Biographia Britannica*, who hath added to the original historian's account, that, "by this ocular demonstration, Prideaux, as well as his partizans, was silenced." It appears, by the sequel, related by Heylin himself, that Prideaux and his partizans were not silenced, but remained convinced after, as well as before, this event, that the clause was spurious. 2. As Heylin read the clause in Latin, he was bound to verify it by an authentic Latin copy. This he knew he could not do, and therefore gave the cue to Westly, to bring him such a copy as would serve the turn; and Westly would have been highly to blame to bring him a copy without the clause, if there was a

be of superior weight to Dr. W——'s, backed only with a large quantity of precarious speculation

copy of any sort to be had with the clause. 3. *Heylin* himself tells us, that the very next year, viz. 1634, Latin copies of the Articles were printed at *Oxford* without the clause, as supposed by the encouragement of *Prideaux*, (so far was *Prideaux* or his partizans from being either satisfied or silenced by *Heylin*'s English copy). For this, *Heylin* tells us, *Prideaux* received a check from *Laud*, then Chancellor of the University; "so," continues *Heylin*, the printers were constrained to reprint the book, or that part of it at the least, according to the genuine and ancient copies." *Ibid.* p. 218. Mr. *Collins* calls this a forgery, and surely not without reason, if, before that constraint, there were no Latin copies which had the clause. But all this management on the side of the clause would not do. The Latin Articles were still printed without the clause. And I have now before me a Latin edition of the Articles without the clause, printed at *Oxford*, by *Leonard Litchfield*, printer to the University, in the year 1636. And this brings us down to the date of *Hales*'s Letter to *Laud*, the expression in which Letter, is equal to a thousand witnesses, that the first clause of the twentieth Article, as it now stands in our present editions, was not held, by the most learned and judicious Divines of those days, to be of the least authority, whether it was found in Latin or English copies. But here rises a new advocate, who will needs have Church-authority to be equally asserted by the twentieth Article, whether you admit the disputed clause or no. This is no other than the compiler of Dr. *Heylin*'s Life in the *Biographia Britannica*, who, having cited the passage which I have put down above, from the *Introduction* to the *Historical and Critical Essay on the thirty-nine Articles*, thus proceeds: "But after all, what is there in the Latin Article, as read by *Prideaux*, any more than in the English one produced by *Heylin*, that contradicts the position of this latter which gave so much offence? Where is the difference in sense between *Non licet ecclesie quicquam instituire quod verbo Dei scripto adversetur*; and, *The church hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and*  
upon



upon very doubtful facts, must be left to their respective readers. For my own part, I am in-

“ authority in controversies of faith; yet not so as to ordain any  
 “ thing contrary to God’s written word. Here is no real, but a  
 “ seeming diversity only. For though the *Latin* is negatively,  
 “ and the *English* affirmatively, expressed, yet the affirmation  
 “ of the *one* is implied in the negation of the *other*; for is it  
 “ not an absurdity to talk of limiting a power which does not  
 “ exist? If the church then had not, generally, a power of  
 “ decreeing, it would be nonsense to say, she might not decree  
 “ contrary to God’s word. The saying, she may not ordain  
 “ any thing contrary to the scriptures, infers, she may ordain  
 “ any thing, relating to her province, that is consistent with  
 “ them. Whether the church always confines herself within  
 “ due bounds, or may not sometimes misuse her authority?  
 “ whether she has any authority in such things at all? or, fi-  
 “ nally, whether there is such a thing as a church, according  
 “ to *Heylin*’s acceptation of that term? are other points; but  
 “ most certainly the twentieth Article of the church of *England*,  
 “ whether *Latin* or *English*, seems as favourable as need be  
 “ wished to the cause *Heylin* defended.” Thus far the Biogra-  
 pher; who attempts, we see, to slip in church-authority upon  
 us at a back-door, which; he would have us believe, stands open  
 to receive it. But, had he looked up to the text upon which  
 he is commenting, he would have seen, that, without the first  
 clause of the Article, *Heylin* could by no means have established  
 any one of his three positions. The second of these positions  
 is, that *The church hath authority of interpreting the sacred*  
*scriptures*. *Heylin* considers the church under two Ideas, 1. The  
 church *representative*, meaning the Clergy; and, 2. The church  
*diffusive*, meaning the aggregate of Head and Members toge-  
 ther. *Vid.* *Examen Historicum*, u. l. p. 218. In these posi-  
 tions he means the church *representative*, exclusive of the church  
*diffusive*. Now, if the church *representative* hath authority to  
 interpret the sacred scriptures, the church *diffusive* is precluded  
 from judging, whether the ordinances and decrees of the church  
*representative* are contrary to God’s word or not. But this  
 clinet



inclined to think, the safer apology for the Fathers would have been that observation which the same

authority of interpreting the scriptures depends entirely on the affirmance of the church's authority in controversies of faith. It is true, there is a negative upon the church's authority to ordain any thing contrary to God's written word, in the subsequent part of the *English* Article. But still the church representative (in modern language, the governors of the church) having an exclusive authority to interpret the scriptures, is the sole judge of the agreement or contrariety of her ordinances, when compared with the word of God. Let us now consider the terms of the *Latin* Article as read by Dr. Prideaux: *Ecclesiae non licet quicquam instituere quod verbo Dei adversetur, neque unum scripturae locum sic exponere potest, ut alteri contradicat.* The Biographer understands this, I suppose, of the church representative, and, for the present, we will understand it so too. Now, wherever there is a *Non licet*, there is a Law implied, and likewise a judge of transgressions against that Law. Who then is the judge of these institutions, with respect to their agreement with the word of God? Not the church representative, for here is no authority given her, in that capacity, in controversies of faith; no exclusive power of interpreting the scriptures. The consequence is, that the power of judgment devolves upon the church diffusive, the *cætus fidelium*, as it is called in the foregoing Article. But if you bring in the affirmative clause, vesting the church-representative with authority in controversies of faith, and if upon it you build an exclusive authority to interpret the scriptures, the church diffusive will be obliged to receive implicitly whatever the church representative sees fit to obtrude upon her. The diversity then between the *Latin* and *English* Article, is a real diversity. According to the *Latin* Article, the church representative has a power of instituting or ordaining, subject nevertheless to the judgment and controul of the church diffusive. According to the *English* Article, the church representative is vested with authority in controversies of faith, which implies an exclusive authority of interpreting the

learned

learned Doctor mentions elsewhere to have been made upon *Arnobius* and *Lactantius*, namely, that *they undertook the defence of Christianity before they understood it*. This is a case which was perhaps common to all the Fathers; and admitted of a reasonable excuse; the same which the Apostle *Paul* allows in a similar one, *they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge* <sup>f</sup>.

*scriptures*, and consequently is the *sole judge* of those *limitations* mentioned in the subsequent parts of the Article; and consequently again, her authority is *boundless*; nor has the church *diffusive* any right, upon this state of the case, to judge whether the church *representative* misuses her authority or not.

<sup>f</sup> Perhaps the most blameable part of the conduct of the Fathers so called, was their introducing *pagan institutions* into Christian worship. And this might be called *the fault of the times*. But *Casaubon* thought they were well justified in this practice, by the example of the Apostle *Paul*. His words are these. *In eâ disputatione* [he is speaking of his *Excercitationes*] *de nominibus Eucharistiæ, unum est caput de nomine Mysterium, Observavi singularem Patrum prudentiam, qui paganorum multa instituta ad pios usus ritulerunt. Ego non nego posteriorum culpa, multa mala inde provenisse; sed piorum illorum veterum factum mordicus defendo exemplo Pauli. Epist. 775 Jac. Aug. Thuano. edit. 1656.* Here then is no fault either of the *men*, or of the *times*. The example of an Apostle precludes all blame of course; nor can we ascribe this instance of *singular prudence* to a *zeal without knowledge*. As to the share the Fathers had in introducing these pagan institutions, there is no reason to think *Casaubon* was mistaken in the fact. What the evils were, of which this introduction was the occasion, every one knows who is acquainted with the state of Popery in the subsequent ages. These evils are here put to the account of posterity. But if the Fathers were *singularly prudent* in introducing these institu-

Whether

Whether the case of our modern Fathers would admit of a like apology, is not material to inquire; as it is certain, that an advocate who should offer it on their behalf, would meet with no thanks at their hands. *They say, they see as well as others, that things are out of order in the church; but alledge the unseasonableness of these times for any attempt to set them right.* In the mean time, others see that the infection of the institutions, why should not posterity be as well justified by the example of the Fathers, as the Fathers were by the example of St. Paul? For will not posterity say, they introduced these additional institutions for the same *pious uses* for which the Fathers first adopted the others? We have here, however, a confirmation from matter of fact, that Dr. Middleton was right in deriving the idolatry and superstition of the church of Rome from the rites of Paganism. The doctor, however, was to be opposed upon this head, right or wrong; for as some of the ritual customs and superstitious devotions of Popery had found their way into some Protestant churches, it would not have looked well on the side of reformed church-rulers to have referred to a Pagan institute for the origin of such customs and devotions. I could indeed point out one liturgic champion, who being unwilling that certain forms of devotion in the service of the church of England, to which objections had been made, should rest upon the authority of Popish precedents alone, thought fit to fetch a parallel case from Homer. Dr. Middleton's opponent, however, if he still abides by his hypothesis, must of necessity change the posture of his defence of the Fathers. If the superstitions they introduced arose too late to be derived from Paganism, either the introduction of them was *no fault*, or, *not the fault of the times*, but of human nature, a sort of fault, which may be incident to Fathers of more modern times.

times



### 336 THE CONFESSIONAL:

times has, in some degree, laid hold even of these venerable personages, and produced *appearances* of secularity, which, whenever a reformation shall be happily brought about, we may be sure will not be suffered to disparage their sacred characters, nor to give offence any longer to those weak and short-sighted brethren, who cannot comprehend that such conformity to the world can contribute to bring the times to maturity for planting and bringing forth more evangelical fruits.

But let us do all sides justice, and now proceed to examine how this plea of *impracticability* has been elucidated and enforced by certain writers, who were a little more prudent and cautious than the above-mentioned Mr. *White*.

“In all proposals and schemes to be reduced to practice,” (says a very dextrous champion of the church of *England*) “we must suppose the world to be WHAT IT IS, not WHAT IT OUGHT TO BE. We must propose, not merely what is absolutely good in itself, but what is so with respect to the prejudices, tempers, and constitutions we know, and are sure to be among us &c.”

To this doctrine a very eminent name is subscribed, which is likewise subscribed to some other doctrines utterly inconsistent with it, at least in

\* Bishop *Hoadley's* Reasonableness of Conformity, apud *Phil. Cantab.* p. 17.



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 337

my apprehension, unless conforming to *what the world is*, and conforming to the sovereignty of Christ in his own kingdom, is precisely one and the same thing <sup>h</sup>.

Be this as it may, the doctrine of conforming to the prejudices, tempers, and constitutions, that we know to be among us, has clearly carried the vogue, and is now pretty generally adopted by the clergy, in whatever repute the rest of the right reverend Author's divinity may be with them.

"It is represented, that the world was never less disposed to be serious and reasonable, than at this period. Religious reflexion, we are informed, is not the *humour* of the times; nor can men of any sort be brought to examine their own opinions and popular fashions, with attention sufficient to enable them to judge, either of the efficacy of such remedies as might be proposed by public authority, or the propriety or expediency of administering them."

"We are therefore advised, to exercise our prudence and our patience a little longer; to wait till our people are in a better temper, and, in the mean time, to bear with their manners and dispositions; gently and gradually correcting their foolish and erroneous notions and habits; but still taking care not to offend them with unseasonable

<sup>h</sup> Sermon on the Nature of the Kingdom of Christ, and the Bishop's Defences of it.

truths,

truths, nor to throw in more light upon them at once, than the weak optics of men, so long used to sit in darkness, are able to bear.—In one word, to consider the world as *it is*, and not as *it ought to be*.”

This is the common cant of those both in higher and lower stations, who desire to put a negative upon a review of our ecclesiastical system. It is something, indeed, that, with respect to our present system, they will own that the body of the people sit in darkness; which implies, that, if they were more enlightened, they would have no inconsiderable objections to the forms in which they now acquiesce. But when it is considered from whence this light and truth are to come, namely, from those records which have preserved to us the Gospel, as it was preached by Christ and his Apostles, is it not a little strange, that *this* truth should be *unseasonable*, and this light *intolerable*, after the Gospel has been taught, received, and professed, in a succession of generations, for near eighteen hundred years?

But to examine his Lordship's doctrine a little more narrowly. What the Bishop calls the prejudices, tempers, and constitutions of men, are known to be much oftener, and in much greater abundance, on the side of folly, falsehood, and vice, than of truth, virtue, and good sense. Prejudice and partial affection carry their point every day, against the loudest remonstrances of reason, and  
the

the clearest light of revelation. If this were a new, or an incidental case, peculiar to the present, and unknown to former times, we might be at a loss for directions how to deal with it, and excuseable enough for taking up with the best expedients that human prudence should suggest. But these, in fact, are the very same circumstances in which our blessed Saviour found the world at his first appearance. The prejudices, tempers, and constitutions of the men of those days, had in them the very same perverseness and obliquity, of which we complain at this hour; and from the fatal effects of which *Jesus* came to save such as would hear his voice.

According to the Bishop's maxim, our Saviour should have ordered his *proposals* with a view to the prejudices and tempers of the Scribes and Pharisees, the leading men among the people to whom he made his first overtures of reformation, and from whom the people derived their own prejudices and tempers.

Instead of this, *Jesus* seems to have formed what this right rev. author calls an *ecclesiastical Utopia*. He paid little respect to the established church, as it was then modelled. He openly reprov'd, and by his teaching oppos'd, the traditionary religion of the rulers of the Jewish church, both as to their forms of worship and points of doctrine; and taught many things on those occasions, which shew he never intended *his* religion should be shut



# 340 THE CONFESSIONAL.

up in a *national* church, or established upon *exclusive* conditions. The consequence was, that he was pursued by the great churchmen of those times with their utmost vengeance, even to the death.

This he knew from the beginning would be his fate ; nevertheless, what is still more strange ! he commanded his Apostles, and in them, as it should seem, all who were to succeed them in the same province, to follow his example, and to adhere to the same methods of reforming the world. It seems, he committed the event to the providence of God, who favoured the plan so far, at least, as to make it probable in the highest degree, that if any other had been substituted in its place, there would not have been one Christian this day in the world.

In answer to this, it hath been suggested, that the circumstances of both clergy and people, are very different *now*, from what they were in the Apostles days. The manners and opinions of mankind, it is said, have undergone great alterations, insomuch that if ministers were to insist, either upon the severe personal discipline, or the unadorned simplicity of faith and worship preached and practised by the Apostles, men would rather be prejudiced against, than converted to the practice and profession of the Gospel.

But is not this to suppose that upon every change of public manners, upon every fluctuation of popular opinions, the teachers of religion have



have a power of varying their rule? that is to say, to suppose what is utterly false? Can they shew any other authentic rule of teaching religion, besides that in the New Testament? Does the N. T. mention any powers given to preachers to judge of *fitness* and *expediency* in respect of events, and in consequence of that foresight, to vary their doctrine and accommodate it to supposed exigencies? If they have no such powers, and yet act as if they had, what are they doing but superseding the authority of Christ in his own kingdom, and setting themselves up in his place?

Some, indeed, lay so much to the account of the great difference there is between the manners and sentiments of the present times, and those of our Saviour's ministry, as to suppose that a discretionary power in the Clergy to accommodate themselves and their doctrines to the times, must arise from the nature of the case; which they endeavour to justify by various arguments, particularly the example of St. Paul, who *became all things to all men*.

In answer to this, I shall, for the present, admit that the manners and opinions of the present generation, are as remote as you will from the genius and spirit of the gospel; yet you cannot say they are more remote from it, than the manners and opinions of the Jews and Gentiles were. On another hand, the manners and principles of the Jews and Gentiles were in no better agreement

with each other, than either of them were with the Gospel. The Gospel was nevertheless preached to them both, as a common measure of believing and obeying unto salvation, and that without any of those accommodations and allowances which are now pleaded for; so that all arguments for such accommodation from *the reason of the thing*, are absolutely excluded by the practice of our Saviour himself.

As to the example of *St. Paul*, it is first to be considered, for what end he *became all things to all men*, namely *that he might gain some*. *Gain them?* To what? — Why to the profession and practice of Christianity. We may be sure then, that he neither indulged them, nor complied with them, in any thing which was a disparagement to the profession, or inconsistent with the practice to which he laboured to *gain them*. *Dr. Middleton* hath insinuated that this saying of *St. Paul* is hyperbolical <sup>h</sup>, or, in his own language, *bad in it some degree of fiction*. And it is probable the Apostle meant no more than that sort of accommodation to the humours of men, which is implied in the *son of man's coming eating and drinking*, by way of shewing, that the austere discipline of *John*, was not *essential* to the faith and duties of the gospel. Let our modern *accommodators* keep within the same bounds, and we shall willingly allow them the benefit of these precedents.

<sup>h</sup> Miscellaneous Tracts, p. 306.

2. But this is not all, St. Paul and his companion *Luke* have between them left us some remarkable instances of the Apostle's compliance with, as well as of his indulgence to persons of different religious prejudices. His permission to Christians to feast or eat with the Gentiles, is plainly qualified by several cautions. His accommodation to Jewish customs turned out, in some instances, very unhappily; and I have sometimes thought that there are some, no very obscure marks, discernible in his epistle to the *Galatians*, that he thought he had formerly gone too far in these compliances. He plainly condemns the practice of circumcision as destructive of the faith of the Gospel, at least in a Greek or a Gentile. And yet it appears he once thought it necessary to circumcise *Timothy*, who was of Greek extraction by the father's side, for no other reason assigned, but *because of the Jews who were in those quarters*<sup>1</sup>.

These matters of fact then, are necessary to be taken in, to illustrate the Apostle's meaning in these large expressions. And it is no less expedient for us to look at matters of fact nearer

<sup>1</sup> Acts xvi. 1—3. Some commentators seem willing to account for the Apostle's conduct on this occasion, by a maxim of the imperial law, *Partus sequitur ventrem*, and by some Rabbinical determinations to the same effect. See *Wesslein*. in loc. What weight such considerations had with St. Paul in such cases, would be hard to judge.

home, to set bounds to the fancies which we are too apt to build upon them.

It is now about fifty years since the venerable Bishop of *Winchester* advanced this maxim of considering the world *as it is*, rather than as it ought to be; and as the maxim itself has been almost universally adopted by the clergy, it is but reasonable to expect it should, by this time, have been justified by better fruits, than would have been brought forth by our endeavouring to reform the world by the stricter precepts of the Gospel. Are then the men, or the times, upon whom these accommodating methods have been tried, in any better disposition than they were, before they were introduced? Are their prejudices rooted out, their tempers softened, their constitutions refined, or their manners purified, by these prudential expedients of reformation? We have seen what Mr. *White* thinks of the matter: and we are told from other hands, that it is the same sort of prejudice, &c. which overawes our superiors from attempting to reform, what they are very sensible greatly wants reforming, in more respects than one.

The Bishop of *Winchester's* maxim is, however, in as much repute as ever. And no wonder. Doctrines, which have in them so much ease and convenience, with respect to the teachers of religion, and so plausible an air of moderation towards their disciples, are in no danger of going  
out



out of fashion, let them be confronted with ever so many plain facts, or refuted by ever so solid reasoning. They pass from hand to hand with the perfect approbation of all sides; and with whomsoever it is that we have any disputes, of which the conduct of the clergy makes a part, disquissitors, dissenters, infidels, or heretics, the apology is always drawn from the nature and necessity of the *times*.

Thus in a late answer to Lord *Bolingbroke*, we are informed that, "There are times and occasions when politeness, civil-prudence, and the private motives of friendship, OUGHT to determine a man *who is to live in the world* to comply with the state and condition of the times, and even to chuse the *worse* instead of the *better* method of doing good <sup>k</sup>."

How good things may be improved by keeping! In the beginning of the century, compliance with the times, was only a matter of *prudence* and *expedience*; it is *now* become a *duty*. The adversaries of the doctrine heretofore were only harmless theoretical *Utopians*. They are now, *fanatics*, *enthusiasts*, and *bigots*.—Justice however must be done to this last writer; who tells us, that "there are times and occasions when the soberest thinker (*i. e.* he who is neither fanatic, enthusiast, nor bigot) will confess, that the interests of particulars, should give way to

<sup>k</sup> Apology prefixed to the third Letter of a View of Lord *Bolingbroke's* philosophy, p. xlix. first edit. 1755.

"those of the public." And one of these occasions, it seems, is this on which he writes: and where he thinks it would be wrong to admit these considerations of politeness, civil-prudence, &c. — How so? Because the noble author laid the author of the *View*, under a necessity to represent him both as *detestable* and *ridiculous*, on account of the freedoms he had taken with *Moses*, *Paul*, &c. and so far his reason is good. But Lord *Bolingbroke* had taken great freedoms (greater than with *Moses* and *Paul*) with the modern clergy of our own establishment. Had the author of the *View*, therefore, been able to have prevailed upon his own *politeness* and *civil-prudence* to have defended *Moses* and *Paul* with sobriety and seriousness, and to have chosen on this occasion, what he calls the *worse* method of doing good, some people will be of opinion that his arguments would have lost nothing by it, either of their *strength* or *perspicuity*; and he would certainly have avoided *one* evil suspicion, which has stuck to him, and of which his *friendly monitor* forgot to apprize him; namely, that his *free* treatment of Lord *Bolingbroke*, did not arise so much from his zeal for true religion, as from his sensibility of the affront offered to the modern clergy; in which, it is but too visible, the author of the *View* is *personally* concerned.

But what are those times and occasions which call for this strain of good breeding? The learned writer hath not condescended to inform us,  
nor

nor what sort of good may be done by it. When religion is to be promoted or defended, a plain man would be apt to think, that no times or occasions should make it a duty to chuse a *worse* method of doing good, but where a *better* is absolutely not to be had. But where, as in the present case, a man is supposed to have *both* methods before him, and yet *ought* to postpone the *better*, and chuse the *worse*, the obligation should seem to arise from some Law, or to refer to some rule of moral practice, which hath no connexion with the Christian religion.

The learned writer, indeed, hath limited this duty to *the man who is to live in the world*. But which of us is *not* to live in the world, in the common acceptation of that expression? If, indeed, by a man who is to live in the world, is meant a man who is *so* to live in it, as never to *give offence* ("the thing," says this writer, of all to "be most dreaded by those who know the world,") it is well if, in the gospel-account, this politeness, civil-prudence, and private friendship, turn out to be any better than, hypocrisy, partiality, worldly wisdom, and respect of persons.

The plain truth is just this. The prejudices, tempers, constitutions, &c. of mankind, with respect to the expedients of reformation proposed in the Christian scriptures, have been much the same in all ages since the heavenly preacher of them first appeared. Sensual, worldly-minded, and incorrigible men *hated* him, because he re-  
proved

proved their pride, their avarice, their hypocrisy, and other vices, without reserve. And such men hate such preachers to this hour, and will hate them to the end of the world. And yet such doctrines must be preached, with the same unreserved freedom, if the men who are appointed to the office would discharge it faithfully. Unless our prudent and polite reformers can produce a new revelation, exhibiting new sanctions, and new terms of salvation; or unless they can shew (what indeed some of them have more than half insinuated) that the same occasions which the men of that generation gave to our Saviour, exist no longer, and that pride, avarice, hypocrisy, superstition, and sensuality, are banished from the face of the earth. When they have made either of these appear, then, but not till then, we can allow them to *accommodate* themselves, their doctrines, and expedients of reformation, to the taste and temper of the times.

But to proceed a little farther in our examination of these commodious maxims. What consequences do these cautious reformers apprehend, from proposing to the world such measures of reformation, as are absolutely good in themselves, and tend to make men what they *ought* to be? Few trials, that I know of, have been made upon this plan, nor does it appear by any repeated experiments, what it is that would disappoint them.



On this occasion we are told, "that factions  
" would be created, dangerous to civil govern-  
" ment itself, and productive of evils in society,  
" which all the good that could possibly result  
" from such endeavours to reform the world,  
" would not counterbalance."

I cannot represent this argument in any terms  
so well adapted to give it its full weight and lustre,  
as those of a late sensible writer, whose views and  
occasions will be explained in the sequel.

"I am very sensible, says this gentleman, that  
" the truth of any point, or the certainty of any  
" matter of fact, can never be determined by the  
" consequences that flow from it; yet I think it a  
" part which *virtue*, as well as *prudence* prescribes,  
" to be more *reserved*, and *cautious* of meddling,  
" where little or no advantage can be gained to  
" society; but where consequences may possibly  
" prove hurtful; and especially where the point  
" in question is only *speculative*. For speculative  
" truth, tho' it greatly contributes to the perfec-  
" tion of human nature, may yet be recovered,  
" in some cases, at too dear a rate. Whatever  
" unsettles the foundations of government, af-  
" fects the well-being of society, or ANY WAY  
" *disturbs the peace and quiet of the world*, is of  
" very destructive consequence; and the man  
" who should retrieve fifty such truths, at the  
" expence of one faction, would, in my opinion,  
" be a very pernicious member of society!"

! Remarks on Dr. Chapman's Charge, &c. p. 9, 10.

Either

Either this ingenious person hath written himself quite out of sight of his own principles; or I am not clearighted enough to discover his meaning. Let me first confess my own ignorance.

1. I cannot comprehend how any truth that is merely *speculative*, can contribute to the perfection of human nature. Human nature has always appeared to me to advance the nearest to perfection, by the means of moral habits, formed and invigorated by principles of truth, and of *religious* truth in particular. Whatever discoveries may be made by the way of *speculation*, if they may not be turned to some practical use, or improvement of the *moral man*, they will pass with me, for little better than the groundless visions of imagination.

2. It is equally mysterious to me, how truths that are merely *speculative*, should unsettle the foundations of government.

3. Nor can I possibly conceive, how such truths as greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature, should *affect* the well-being of society. I mean, as I suppose he does, affect it with an evil influence.

4. In the last place, I should have apprehended, that the recovery of *fifty* truths, *which greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature*, would pay the expence of *one* faction at least, even though the peace and quiet of the world should be, in some measure, disturbed by it; unless we must

must say, that little or no advantage is gained to society, by the recovery of *so many* such truths, as greatly contribute to the perfection of human nature.

As this ingenious writer has, on this occasion, contrary to his custom, expressed himself loosely and ambiguously, I dare not take upon me to ascertain his meaning. I imagine it, however, to be this. That where speculative errors are established by public authority, it is better to let them rest, than to attempt to remove them at the hazard of a faction, or by any such opposition or remonstrance, as any way disturbs the peace and quiet of the world.

Now to this doctrine I would readily subscribe, if I knew of any truth or error of the *religious* kind (and of such truth and error this author is here treating) that could be called *merely speculative*; that is to say, such truth or error, as hath no influence or tendency to improve, or debase, the religious conduct of those who entertain or reject it respectively. With respect to such truth, or such error, it is of little consequence what becomes of them. But few are the truths or errors that I have met with of this complexion.

It should seem indeed, that this remarker does not restrain this *prudence* and *caution* to these insignificant truths and errors. For, he says, "WHATEVER unsettles the foundations of government, &c. is of very destructive consequence."

Can

352 THE CONFESSIONAL

Can this be admitted, without condemning the practice of the Apostles, and first preachers of Christianity?

*These, said their Thessalonian adversaries, that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also, whom Jason hath received; and these all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying, there is another king, one JESUS<sup>m</sup>.*

I expect here to be told, that the Apostles were falsely accused, and that they made no attempt to unsettle Cæsar's government. I acknowledge it. But the *faction* was formed upon that supposition, and operated on the well-being of society, upon that occasion at least, with as much malignity, as if the charge had been ever so true. And may not the same thing happen again? Has it not happened in many instances, that pious and zealous reformers have been accused of disturbing the public peace, when they were as innocent as the Apostles themselves of any such intention?

Besides, no sensible man can doubt but the immediate establishment of Christianity in those early days, would have made great alterations in the *Gentile*, as well as the *Jewish* civil and religious polity. The total abolition of the latter was the inevitable consequence of the Kingship of *Jesus*; and what struggles and tumults were occasioned by attempting to introduce it, the sacred history has fairly informed us. And yet I pre-

<sup>m</sup> Acts, xvii. 6, 7.



sume, our Lord imagined, the truths that would thus be *recovered* to mankind, would more than atone for these temporary inconveniencies. Otherwise he would certainly have taken and prescribed other measures.

The learned writer, with whom I am making so free, was a second to Dr. *Middleton* in the controversy concerning the *continuance* of *miraculous powers* in the *Christian Church*, and a very able one; and I the rather hope I have not misunderstood or misrepresented his meaning in the foregoing citation, as he immediately subjoins to it the following apology for meddling in *that* controversy.

“ But, in the present debate, [concerning miraculous powers, &c.] all such fears are vain and chimerical. Where we may dispute for ever, without unsettling or disturbing any thing, except some fanciful systems, which have been ingrafted on the religion of the gospel, and which some of our present churchmen, for reasons of policy, have been endeavouring to defend, as absolutely necessary to support it.”

That is to say, “ The miraculous powers of the post-apostolic church, are not affirmed in an established Article, or Homily.” Had that been the case, the point could not have been disputed without unsettling, or at least disturbing, something more than a fanciful system of our present churchmen. Something with a more substantial

stantial support, than the *political* reasons above-mentioned.

I am of opinion, that, if some of our ancient churchmen in former times had foreseen this controversy, or if some of our modern doctors had even yet the power to bring it about, the question, so far as *legal* decision could give it a sanction, would not be found so naked of this kind of support. Had this point been secured in due time, the Doctors *Chapman, Stebbing, Church, and Dodwell*, who, for the general, have been so tame in the controversy, that you might *stroak* them, would have thundered about Dr. *Middleton's* ears from the artillery of an establishment, the moment he had made his appearance in that province; and have pleyed him with their great and small shot, as long as ever he was in a condition to be galled by it.

I should be glad to know, what, in such circumstances, would have been the conduct of this his ingenious advocate? He will hardly say, that little or no advantage could be gained to society by this debate, after it has been demonstrated by Dr. *Middleton, Mr. Toll, and himself*, how much the Protestant cause is interested in the determination of so important a fact. He calls the system contrary to that he espouses, a *fanciful* one, unsupported by any thing, but the dirty politics of interested churchmen. Would the circumstance of being *established* have added any truth or soli-

lidity to the system, or given it any more merit with respect to the Protestant cause? If not, what would there be in the *one* case, that ought to hinder a reasonable and conscientious Protestant from exposing and confuting it, more than in the *other*? Would it be sufficient to excuse a man so persuaded, that a faction might be occasioned by the dispute, and something unsettled and disturbed, which might affect the peace and quiet or welfare of society?

Now, it is very possible that some other person, equally discerning, able, and conscientious as the Remarker, may think some *other* system of these fanciful divines just as pernicious to the cause of true religion, and just as void of truth and reason; as this of the *miraculous powers*; some system, I mean, which is under the protection of an establishment. What is to be done? Is this man to sit down and acquiesce with the herd, under the apprehension of causing a *faction*, and unsettling, in some degree at least, the peace and quiet of the world? Had this been the persuasion of good men at *all* periods, what had been the creed of the Protestant, or indeed of the Christian world at this instant?

It is well for us that some, both of our forefathers and contemporaries, have had none of these scruples. And it may perhaps add some light to the present enquiry, to remark how it has fared with some of these later adventurers,

A a

upon

### 356 THE CONFESSIONAL

upon a point of orthodoxy, of which all the churches of *Europe* are extremely tenacious.

It is well known, that, since the commencement of the present century, the great *Athanasius* has been attacked by a succession of eminent men, who could not be brought to think his system less *fanciful*, for being enclosed in the fortress of an established Creed.

Mr. *Whiston* led the way. A faction ensued, and the event was, his expulsion from a famous university, and an exclusion from all other preferment. Dr. *Clarke* made the next effort, nor could he, who was a much more temperate man, prevent a faction; and what would have come of it in the end, if an effectual interposition from the *higher* powers had not over-ruled those of the *lower*, none can tell. More lately, a learned and eminent prelate, in a neighbouring kingdom, opened the trenches once more before the formidable *Athanasius*, with all his myrmidons and fortifications about him. *Faction* was again the consequence; and, had not death snatch'd him off the stage in a lucky moment (of which I am informed as I am writing this), he might probably have been sent, whither his mitre and his rochet would not have followed him. There were several others of less note, who had their *factions* as well as these more eminent leaders; but these are enough to explain the case in hand.

Let the next question be concerning these *factions*. Whence did they arise? As far as I  
can



can perceive, the laity of *Great-Britain* and *Ireland* were all this while very much at their ease, carried on their affairs with their usual tranquillity and success; nor did I ever hear, that the well-being of society was at all affected, at any of those periods of time when the Trinitarian controversy was on the anvil. Hence it should seem, that no factions either arose or spread among the common people on these occasions; and yet factions there were, as appears both by the offence given by, and the molestation returned to, the culprits above-mentioned. We must look for them then among the clergy.

Who expelled Mr. *Whiston*? The churchmen of *Cambridge*. Who attempted to proscribe Dr. *Clarke*? The churchmen of the Lower House of Convocation. Who took counsel against the Bishop of *Clogher*? The great churchmen of *Ireland*. Who prosecuted Dr. *Carter* in the ecclesiastical court? The church-officers of *Deal*, at the instigation, as it is said, of a churchman of that place. Who prosecuted Mr. *Emlyn* in *Ireland*, and Messieurs *Pierce*, *Withers*, and *Hallet*, in *England*? The dissenting clergy, abetted, as appeared openly in the first case <sup>a</sup>, and as was strongly suspected in the latter <sup>b</sup>, by some great churchmen of the established church. In one word, what layman, who was not the instrument

<sup>a</sup> See *Emlyn's Works*, vol. I. p. 26.

<sup>b</sup> *Tindal's Transl. of Rapin*, 8vo, 1746, vol. XXVII. p. 344.

of some one or more churchmen, was concerned in these *factions*?

Let it then no longer be said, that the *times*, but that the *churchmen*, are not ripe for a reformation. The *impracticability*, as far as yet appears, arises wholly from that quarter. Let the churchmen of the establishment shew themselves desirous of, and sincere in soliciting, a reformation of our ecclesiastical constitution; and, if they miscarry in their endeavours, it is but equitable that the impracticability should no longer be put to their account.

Here, methinks, I perceive a sly orthodox brother, who has all this while hung his ears in a corner, begin now to prick them up, and come forward with this expostulation in his mouth: "What! reform according to the detestable systems of *Arius* or *Socinus*! Is it not *that* you are pleading for? And does not this confirm the suspicions of those who imputed these views to the *free and candid Disquisitors*?"

Soft and fair. Let the Disquisitors answer for themselves and their own views and principles; but do not prejudge them beforehand. They have laid before you a great many particulars, which perhaps give more *open* and *immediate* offence to the common people, than the doctrines of the *Trinity*; about which, I am apt to think, few of them form any ideas. Had you shewn a disposition to reform these *necessary mat-*  
ters,

ters, and had you set about it with alacrity, time and credit would have been given you for the rest. This I presume to say on the part of the Disquisitors.

On my own part, I am neither afraid nor ashamed to call for a review of our Trinitarian forms, as what, I think, is quite necessary for the honour of the church herself. Consider how the case stands on the very face of our present forms.

“So that in ALL THINGS (*νατα νατα*) says the “*Athanasian* Creed, the Unity in Trinity, and “the Trinity in Unity, is [or ought] to be worshiped.” Is this the case in all our forms of worship? Turn back to the *Litany*, and you will see three distinct invocations of the three Persons, to each of whom the term *God* is assigned; implying a sufficiency in each, in his *personal* capacity, to hear and grant the petition. Instances, equally remarkable and notorious, of our deviation from the *Athanasian* maxim, might be given in great abundance. What miserable sophistry Dr. *Waterland* employed to make our liturgical forms consistent, has been noticed in these papers: nor, to say the truth, is Dr. *Clarke* under much less embarrassment. And, while these inconsistencies remain, I cannot see how a defender of our forms of worship should be in much better agreement with *Athanasius*, than *Whiston*, *Clarke*, or *Clayton*. To make these matters consistent, is

certainly the proper object of a *review*, on which side soever of the contradiction the truth may lye.

One of the last pieces published on the subject of the Trinity, was, *An Appeal to the Common-sense of all Christian People, &c.* which book has passed through two editions without any sort of reply that I have heard of P. This looks as if *able* writers were not *willing* to meddle with the subject, or that *willing* writers were not *able* to manage it. Many of the wiser and more thinking part of the clergy have been long sick of the *Athanasian Creed*, and have, by degrees, disused it in their churches. And many of the congregations, where it has been so disused, if by accident an officiating stranger should read it to them in its course, have been known to signify their surprize and dislike by very manifest tokens q.

P When this was written, I did not know of Dr. Macdonel's Answer to the *Appeal*, and much less of the *Appellant's* replication, intituled *The Trinitarian Controversy reviewed*, printed for Millar, 1760. It is something, however, to my purpose, that no *Englishman* of any name has offered to confute the *Appeal*, and that the *Athanasian* doctrine seems to be consigned to the sole protection of our *Irish* champion, who makes so indifferent a figure in the hands of the *Appellant*, that probably we shall hear no more of him; the said *Appellant* having said enough to deter wise men of both sides from meddling farther in the controversy, unless in the way of a Review.

q See *A serious and dispassionate Inquiry, &c.* concerning some passages in the public Liturgy, *Athanasian Creed, &c.* p. 80—95, 96. Of this I have been an eye-witness more than once.

From



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 361

From these particulars I conclude, and venture to repeat it, that, when our leading churchmen tell us of the *impracticability* of an ecclesiastical reformation, through the unripeness of the times, the true meaning is, that they cannot obtain *their own* consent to any measure, or to any attempt of that sort. And no marvel. A reformation that should reach to the extent of our deviations from the scriptures (and, when the door is once opened, who knows how far a reformation might extend?) would not stop at a few liturgical forms and ceremonies. The conductors of it might probably proceed to inquire, how far the present polity of the church stood upon a scriptural foundation? And, should such inquiry be pursued to good effect, the consequence might be, that the repose of some great churchmen would be grievously disturbed, their labours increased, the nature and tendency of their present occupations greatly altered, and their *temporalities* reduced to a due proportion to their duties and services \*.

\* “ Nothing has misled people more in their notions and desires of Reformation, than their not being able to distinguish between some abuses, and the *Functions* corrupted by them; so that, instead of taking away abuses, they have gone to change ancient and excellent constitutions. On the other hand, nothing has perhaps heightened this weakness more, than that some have been so zealous for the defence of these abuses, that one would think they love the Function chiefly for the sake of the abuses, and would be little concerned for it, if these were separated from it. Others, that dislike the abuses, yet know not how to part with them, fearing

The worthy friend who sent me the first notice of the demise of Bishop Clayton, and an account of the clerical machinations against him, inclosed in the same packet a small manuscript, intituled, *The Bishop of Clogher's Speech, made in the House of Lords in Ireland, Febr. 2, 1756* \*. I will not answer for the authenticity of this little rescript, though it seems to have passed for genuine in that country; and it is certain that the Bishop moved in Parliament for such a Bill as is there mentioned. In this Speech I find the following passage: "I am persuaded, that if my Lords the Bishops will but shew themselves inclined to amend, what they cannot but acknowledge to be amiss, they will find the laity ready to assist and support them rather than otherwise."

"that the making of some changes may draw more after it; and that the humour of making alterations, being thus put in fermentation, may grow so violent, that it will not be easily restrained or governed." *Preface to Bishop Burnet's Hist. of the Rights of Princes, &c. p. 9.* But what if the Functions and the abuses are by length of time, and the remissness of indolent authority, become so intimately incorporated, that there is no separating them? Do not the latter sort of *Anti-reformers* here mentioned plainly see this? And is not this the ground of their apprehension? And if, through the perverseness of the former sort, (who make up by much the greatest number and strength of *Anti-reformers*) we cannot have the *Functions* without the *abuses*, may there not be other Functions found out, which would equally answer the end of an effectual Reformation?

\* It has since been printed at London, for Baldwin and Cooper, 1757.

No man knew the world better than the late Bishop of *Clogher*. His adversaries objected it to him, after they had ransacked all the obscure corners of the kingdom for scandal, that he knew it but *too well*. Even *they* therefore might take his word on this head. But indeed the thing speaks for itself. Whenever the people shall see this *impracticability* subdued on the part of the clergy, it is impossible they should not be convinced both of the *utility* of the measure, and of the *integrity* of those who undertake and promote it. Such instances of self-denial, and so many circumstances of ease and profit sacrificed to the public welfare and edification, cannot but give them the highest esteem and affection for so faithful and disinterested Pastors.

I am willing, however, that our spiritual fathers, among whom are some persons of distinguished merit, should have the benefit of every plea that can possibly be offered for their inactivity and acquiescence in our present inconvenient and unedifying system. And if any of them can derive any consolation to themselves, or any apology to the world for their conduct, from the following concession, I shall not desire to deprive them of it.

“Though the church of Christ,” saith a pious and learned writer, “has been thus corrupted  
 “[viz. by copying the church of *Rome* more or  
 “less] in all ages and nations, yet there have  
 “been, and will be in all, many who receive the  
 “seal

“ seal of God, and worship him in spirit and in  
 “ truth. And of these, as many have filled high  
 “ stations as low ones. Such persons, though  
 “ they have concurred in the support of what is  
 “ contrary to the pure religion, have, however,  
 “ done it innocently with respect to themselves,  
 “ being led thereto by *invincible prejudices*.”

What particular examples this good man had in his eye, would be hard to say. Perhaps, some of the first Bishops of the Christian church, commonly called *the Fathers*, as well as Pastors of more modern times. Let us pitch upon a few of the most eminent of these, and begin with the upper classes first.

The *Fathers*, so called, have ever been esteemed the lights of the Christian church, and have been justly revered for their piety and sanctity of manners. But no one will deny, that they were deeply prejudiced in favour of some things, which greatly disfigured and corrupted true religion. The question is, how far these *prejudices* were *invincible*?

Jerom is one who hath figured in all ages, both on account of the austerity of his discipline, and the superiority of his learning. Both popish and protestant writers have, by turns, put their cause under his patronage; till the Protestants found they were losers upon the balance, and from thenceforward began to look a little more narrowly into the character and merits of the man;

‘ Dr. David Hartley’s Observations on Man, vol. II. p. 371.  
 and



and then they found his genius was wholly turned to *bragging* and *diffimulation* <sup>u</sup>, that he frequently contradicted himself <sup>w</sup>, and paid little regard to truth, when he had a controversial point to carry, for which *Le Clerc* gives a very probable reason, namely, his reading and admiring *Cicero*. "For *Cicero*," says this excellent Critic, "provided what he says suits his present purpose, and may make an impression on his audience, takes no thought whether it be true, nor cares at all whether he hath contradicted it elsewhere <sup>x</sup>."

<sup>u</sup> *Ingenium Hieronymi totum fuit ad jactationem & diffimulationem compositum.* *Le Clerc, Quaestiones Hieronymianæ, III. p. 62.*

<sup>w</sup> *Le Clerc, Sentimens de quelques Theologiens d' Hollande, &c. Lettre xiii. p. 307.*

<sup>x</sup> *J. Clerici Quaestiones Hieronymianæ, VIII. § xiii. p. 248.* He gives several instances of this conduct of *Cicero*, and observes after *Quintilian*, and after *Cicero* himself, that the definition of an Orator should not be what it usually was, *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, but *vir callidus mentiendi pro re nata, & dissimulandi peritus*. *Le Clerc* shews, that *Jerom* was deeply tinctured with this oratorical craft, and had his *orationes causarum & temporum, non judicii*, as well as *Tully*, which is likewise acknowledged by *Erasmus*, his great advocate. But what shall we say to a certain Christian divine and critic, who will have it "that in all this *Cicero* acted no *unfair* part, because forsooth he acted it not in his *real*, but his *personated* character." *Postscript to Dr. Warburton's Visitation-sermon*, printed for *Fletcher Gyles*, 1738. p. 31. A *personated* character is a *felicitious* one, and whoever puts on such a character with intent to deceive, seems to me not only to act an *unfair* but an *immoral* part. "Hold, says the nimble casuist, *unfair* is an expression that

-Another

Another excellent pen hath proved these contradictions upon more of the Fathers, particularly in one instance which shews a disingenuity, of which the most *invincibly prejudiced* among them, must have been conscious. He has shewn, from the words of above a dozen of them, that when the question was concerning conformity to any particular religion, they all had the clearest

"relates to a man's *breeding*, to a point of civility, in not im-  
"posing on *good company*, rather than his *morals*." The reader will be pleased to take notice, that this *good company* was often a bench of judges, assembled to try causes of the greatest importance to the peace and welfare of the community. Had *Cicero* appeared on the stage in the character of *Agamemnon*, and spoke nothing but what *Euripides* put into his mouth, the *good company* would have had no reason to complain, either of his *rudeness* or his *dishonesty*. But when he appears in the naked character of *Cicero* the advocate, and endeavours to impose upon a solemn tribunal, by a false representation of facts in a criminal cause, he forfeits all pretensions to the character of a good patriot or an honest man. And, whatever becomes of his *breeding*, in so far as he lays claim to these titles, is every way *unfair*. There is, however, one instance upon record, which impeaches *Tully's breeding*. *Quintilian* informs us, that he boasted, *se tenebras offudisse iudicibus in causâ Cluentii*. *Instit. Orat. lib. ii. cap. 17.* What would be thought of an *Attorney-General* that should *boast*, he had abused and misled the Judges of the court of King's-Bench? Certainly not that he was a *polite man*. But what is this to *Jerom*? A great deal to *Jerom*, and to the rest of the Fathers defended by the Prefacer to *Julian*. The Apology for *Cicero* extends to the *philosophical*, as well as rhetorical discipline of those times. If that was *blameless*, the Fathers who pursued it were so too. Their faults were therefore neither faults of the *times* nor of the *men*; that is, the Fathers had no faults at all.

conception

conception of the iniquity as well as impiety of *intolerance*. Nevertheless, his adversary challenged him to shew a single instance, even in those councils of which these Fathers were members, and wherein some of them presided, where there was any trace of toleration towards those who differed from the established faith and opinions. The other knew better than to undertake so hopeless a task; and therefore contented himself with shewing, that these fathers contradicted in their *practice*, what they had solemnly laid down for their incontestable *principles* <sup>u</sup>. On which side of such a contradiction can the *invincible* prejudice be supposed to lie?

To draw nearer to our own times, and to mention one of the most illustrious characters in all history. *Erasmus* saw, complained of, censured, and exposed, the corruptions of Popery with all freedom. It is hardly possible he should not perceive, that all these corruptions arose from the spurious authority to which the Popes laid claim. Many passages, in his comments and paraphrases on the New Testament, shew his discernment in this matter beyond dispute. One, I have pointed out in the note <sup>w</sup>. And

<sup>u</sup> *Barbeyrac*, *Traité de la Morale des Peres*, Chap. xii. § xl. p. 185.

<sup>w</sup> *Jam vero de Romani Pontificis potestate, pene negotiosius disputatur, quam de potestate Dei, dum quærimus de duplici illius potestate, et an possit abrogare quod scriptis apostolicis decretum est? An possit aliquid statuere quod pugnet cum doctrina evangelica?*

### 368 THE CONFESSIONAL

to these an hundred more might be added. He well knew that the scandalous traffick of indul-

*An possit novum articulum condere in fidei simbolo? Utrum majorem habeat potestatem quam Petrus, an parem? An possit præter angelis? Utrum simplex homo sit, an quasi Deus, an participet utramque naturam cum Christo? An clementior sit quam fuerit Christus, cum is non legatur quemquam a purgatorii penis revocasse? An solus omnium non possit errare? Sexcenta id genus disputantur, magnis editis voluminibus, idque a magnis Theologis, præsertim professione religionis insignibus. Atque hæc sunt non sine manifesta suspitione adulationis, nec sine injuria Christi, ad quem collati principes, quantumvis magni, quid aliud sunt quam vermiculi? An putant hæc placere LEONI nostro, germano, veroque Christi vicario, qui tanquam verus pastor, nihil habet antiquius salute gregis christiani, ut verus Christi vicarius, nihil habet carius gloria principis sui Christi. ERASM. Annotat. in 1 Tim. i. 6. Upon this passage, I would observe, 1. That Erasmus very well knew that the transalpine divines held all these questions in the affirmative. 2. That he was little less guilty of the adulation wherewith he reproaches them, in calling LEO X. the true vicar of Christ, who had nothing more at heart than the glory of his prince, and the salvation of the Christian flock. ERASMUS could be no stranger to what all the world knew, namely, that neither the personal, nor papal character of LEO, intitled him to any such encomium. 3. He insinuates, that these strains of adulation were disagreeable to LEO; and yet it is certain that LEO never discouraged them, as Erasmus very well knew. Palavicini, defending this pope against the censures of Father Paul, who had said, "that he was better acquainted with profane letters, than with sacred or religious learning," allows the fact; but in alleviation of it says, "that he favoured scholastic divinity, and that he honoured three divines of this complexion with the purple, and made a fourth master of the sacred palace." See BAYLE's Dictionary, Art. LEO X. Rem. [H]. These divines then above all others were LEO's favourites. Was this, do you suppose, be-*  

gences



gences was grounded on the papal power, and upon no more of it than the most moderate doctors asserted to belong to it. If *Erasmus* was of a different opinion, he might be retained in the church by a *prejudice*, but certainly not an *invincible* one \*.

Come we now to some doctors of our own *reformed* church. I do not know of any of our Bishops, since the Reformation, who has had more incense offered up to him, than Archbishop *Whitgift*, and that by the very historian from whom I take the following fact.

In the year 1572, a pamphlet was published in defence of the famous *Admonition* to parliament, intituled *An Exhortation to the Bishops*, wherein their Lordships were reminded, "how hard it was to punish the favourers and abettors of the *Admonition*, because they did but

cause these doctors had determined the questions above-mentioned in the negative? Was *Erasmus* a stranger to the promotion of three cardinals? or to the characters and studies of the men? *Erasmus*, I say, who knew what was doing in every court, and in every corner of *Europe*? Let it not be said, that these incidents might not have happened when *Erasmus* wrote his *Annotations*. Pope *LEO X.* died before *Erasmus* published the third of his five editions of the N. T. and the same annotation is found in them all. Can it be said, with the least probability, that *Erasmus's* prejudices on this head were *invincible*.

\* See what *Bayle* says of this subject. Dict. Art. AGRICOLA GEORGE, Rem. [B].

# 370 THE CONFESSIONAL

"disclose the disorders of the church of *England*,  
 "and only required a reformation of the same,  
 "according to the rule of God's word. Where-  
 "as many lewd and light books and ballads flew  
 "abroad, printed not only without reprehension,  
 "but *cum privilegio*."

Archbishop *Whitgift* condescended to answer this pamphlet, and to this objection thought fit to say, "it was a fault to suffer lewd books and  
 "ballads touching *manners*, but it was a greater  
 "fault to suffer books and libels, disturbing the  
 "*peace of the church*, and defacing *true religion*."

Which was to say, 1. That lewd books and ballads, printed with privilege, neither disturbed the peace of the church, nor defaced true religion. 2. That provided the church might quietly enjoy and practise her forms, rites, and ceremonies, titles, and emoluments, it was the less material what were the *manners* of her members. 3. That *true religion* consisted in those forms, rites, ceremonies, titles, and powers, which the Puritans were for defacing.

These were *prejudices* with a witness, and, if they were *invincible*, what was this man doing so long, in two divinity chairs in *Cambridge*? Shall we say that men's *prejudices* become *invin-*

7 *Strype's* life of Archbishop *Whitgift*, p. 40. who honestly tells us, p. 50. that he took the account of *Cartwright's* Reply from *Whitgift* himself.

cible

cible as soon as ever you name disorders in the church, and talk of reforming them?

I make a transition from this prelate to Archbishop *Wake*, though the step is a pretty long one. But it is not for want of matter in the interval of time, or of *prejudices* in the intermediate occupiers of the see of *Canterbury*, but through a willingness to save the reader's time and my own.

Dr. *Wake*, then Bishop of *Lincoln*, at the trial of *Sacheverell*, spoke with great force and propriety in defence of the Toleration-act, and in vindication of those, who, under a commission from K. *William*, 1689, were appointed to review the liturgy, and other parts of our ecclesiastical constitution, for which, according to the said Dr. *Wake*, there was great occasion. When the Schism-bill was in agitation, Dr. *Wake*, still Bishop of *Lincoln*, opposed it in its progress through the House of Lords, and, when passed, protested against it. But when, in the year 1718, this same Schism-bill was attacked, Dr. *Wake*, then Archbishop of *Canterbury*, opposed the repeal of it with all his might, alledging, that it was one of the main *bulwarks* and *supporters* of the *established church*; whereas, in his speech above-mentioned, he insisted, that the established church neither lost nor suffered any thing by the tolera-

tion of dissenters. On which side lay the invincible prejudice in this case \* ?

This is the farthest I chuse to venture towards the present times, over which, if I could, I would drop a veil for the sake of some particulars, who, like *Mercurius trivialis*, have pointed out the right road, without stirring an inch themselves from the centre of the cross-lanes. Peace be with those of them that are gone. To such of them as remain, I would recommend the serious consideration of what follows that concession last cited from Dr. Hartley.

" Nevertheless, when it so happens, that persons in high stations in the church have their eyes enlightened, and see the corruptions and deficiencies of it, they must incur the prophetic censures in the highest degree, if they still concur, nay, if they do not endeavour to reform, and purge out these defilements; and

\* " A very ancient and worthy gentleman, now living, [viz. 1755] speaking occasionally of Archbishop Wake, in a company where I lately was, said, he well remembered to have seen his Grace returning from court, on the day that he had been there to kiss his Majesty's hand upon his advancement to the see of *Canterbury*. Dining that day at a friend's house, where Dr. S. Clarke was one of the guests, he mentioned this incident; upon which the company, as is common, made their several remarks upon that promotion. Dr. Clarke continued silent for some time; but said at last, *We have now an Archbishop who is Priest enough.*" Memoir communicated to the author by a learned friend. It seems, Dr. Clarke knew the man better than some others did.

" though



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 373

" though they cannot, according to this proposition, expect entire success, yet they may be  
 " blessed with such a degree, as will abundantly  
 " compensate their utmost endeavours, and rank  
 " them with the Prophets and Apostles <sup>a</sup>."

Nothing can possibly expose the futility of any pretences to defer reformation, upon account of the *unripeness* of the times, more effectually, than the solemn truths contained in these few words. Dr. *Hartley*, indeed, proceeds to observe, that  
 " this corruption and degeneracy of the Christian  
 " church—has, all other things being supposed  
 " to remain the same, suited our circumstances  
 " in the best manner possible, and will continue  
 " to do, as long as it subsists. God," says he,  
 " brings good out of evil, and draws men to  
 " himself in such manner, as their natures will  
 " admit of, by external pomp and power, by  
 " things not good in themselves, and by some  
 " that are profane and unholy. The impurity  
 " of mankind is too gross, to unite at once with  
 " the strict purity of the Gospel." Hence he takes occasion to infer, that good men ought to submit to the ecclesiastical *powers that be*, for conscience sake, as well as to the civil ones. And hence, I do not doubt but *the ecclesiastical powers that be*, will infer the *no necessity* of altering any thing in their present systems: and so we get rid of these *prophetical* censures at once.

<sup>a</sup> Observations on Man, u. f.

But Dr. Hartley knew well enough what he said, and was only explaining a case which he found in his Bible. The Prophet *Isaiah* speaks of certain *wise* and *prudent* men of his time, who taught the fear of God by the precept of men <sup>v</sup>. But inasmuch as the fear of God was taught, though by things evil, profane, and unholy in themselves, whatever Dr. Hartley has said concerning God's bringing good out of evil, is just as applicable to this period of the *Jewish* church, as to any posterior state of the *Christian*. It was upon these considerations, that our Saviour and his Apostles observed the law, and prescribed obedience to those who sat in *Moses's* seat.

But did these considerations exculpate the *wise* and *prudent* men of *Isaiah's* time, or the Scribes and Pharisees of Christ's days, who taught for doctrines the commandments of men? By no means; the prophetic censures fell heavily on them both. And if our enlightened churchmen in high stations would avoid them, let them go and learn what that meaneth, *Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

They will tell us, perhaps, that, sensible as they are of these corruptions, they are equally sensible of the impossibility that their endeavours or remonstrances should overcome the prejudices or

perverseness of their brethren, especially as they would be likely to stand alone and unsupported in the conflict; and consequently that there is not the least hope that reformation would be advanced, in whole or in part, by the utmost efforts they could make.

But let them try their strength, and then they will have a better right to this apology. Men's endeavours, in this as well as in other cases, are not to be suspended by the improbability of success, or even by trials apparently fruitless. We are not judges what success our pious endeavours may have in due time. *The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.* The light of our testimony may appear to be wholly extinguished, and the seed we sow, totally buried and corrupted, and yet the one may blaze out, and the other spring up and flourish, in its due season, how, and where, and when, we are unable to foresee or even to conceive.

I believe, no book of equal importance ever sunk so suddenly into oblivion as the *Free and Candid Disquisitions*; nor was any other ever treated with more contempt and scorn by those who ought to have paid the greatest regard to the subject of it. In short, its pernicious tendency was echoed in the conversation of every expectant of church-preferment, whose success depended, in any degree, upon the favour of his ecclesiastical superiors.

B b 3

But,

But, in spite of all these arts and all this contumely, the book has had no inconsiderable effects among particular persons. It has caused the forms of the church to be weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, where they have been found greatly wanting. Many, who formerly paid an implicit veneration to them, begin now to compare and reason upon them, and to draw inferences and conclusions by no means in their favour. These impressions may possibly be working silently and imperceptibly to a good end, and they who wish well to the prosperity of our *Israel* may reap the good fruit of them, either in the present or a future generation. In the mean time, others may *sleep on, and take their rest*, perhaps, for many years to come, secure in their numbers and influence, against the importunity of clamorous Disquifiers. The Almighty works those things which are well-pleasing to him, in his own way, and in his own time, by methods to us inscrutable, and out of the reach of human projects. Methods of violence seldom advance the interests of peace and truth. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.* And though *the spirit of slumber* should have seized the public for the present, the drowsiness will in time be shaken off, and the hearts and understandings of pastors and people opened, as of one man, and prepared to receive those truths, which at present are confined to the breasts of a few, who, by the blessing of God,



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 317

God, have found the means of emancipating themselves from the bondage of *fear*, the idolatry of *lucre*, and the enchantments of *worldly* wisdom, and who, having born their testimony in due season, though without effect for the present, will be found to have delivered their own souls, in the solemn hour of visitation.

Having now examined the pleas that have been offered against a reformation of our ecclesiastical system, it may possibly be expected I should descend to particulars, and point out some of the principal objects, at least, of the reform I may be supposed to solicit.

The equitable reader, however, will recollect, that my subject leads me only to *one* particular, the case of subscription to human creeds and confessions, and other ecclesiastical forms, which are required to be assented to, as being *agreeable to the word of God*. Undoubtedly such of these as have not this agreement with holy writ, ought not to be retained in the church. Nevertheless, as something is due to the ignorance and prejudices of well-meaning people, it may be allowed not to be expedient to discontinue the *use* of them all at once, provided proper endeavours are used to prepare the people for their removal at a reasonable time, by informing them wherein their disagreement with the Christian scriptures consists. But nothing can be more cruel, nothing more inequitable, than to insist, that candidates for the

### 378 THE CONFESSIONAL.

ministry should give their solemn assent and consent to articles of faith, and modes of discipline and worship, which it is certain many of them must think to be inconsistent with the word of God, and which, for that reason, they are obliged to wrest and distort from their natural original meaning, before they can reconcile themselves to this article of conformity.

I am not now looking into any man's heart. I have given indisputable proofs of what I am here advancing, from the writings of men of great eminence in the church of *England*, by the systems of some or other of whom, it is reasonable to suppose, the common run of subscribers form their sentiments, or quiet their scruples.

This stumbling-block should therefore be removed out of the way, with the utmost expedition. As a test of opinions, it is utterly useless. It is an affair in which the prejudices of the people have nothing to do. The candidates for the ministry are supposed to be persons of learning, capable of judging of such things; and liable to be *hurt* and *disquieted* by so disagreeable a dilemma, as they are brought into by this piece of discipline. If there are any of this class weak enough to be offended with the removal of this barrier of orthodoxy, why let *them* be gratified too. The restoration of their sensible and conscientious brethren to their christian liberty, need not preclude them from expressing their belief of, and their  
veneration

eneration for, every thing established in the church of *England*, in as high terms as they can invent.

• With all alacrity would I turn this class over to Dr. *Rutherford's* church-governors, upon the principle which induced Bishop *Andrews* to give up his brother *Neale's* purse to King *James I.* The story is in point, and not unedifying. "The Bishops of *Winchester* and *Durham* (*Andrews* and *Neale*) were standing behind the King's chair while his Majesty was at dinner. His Majesty asked the Bishops, *My Lords, cannot I take my subjects money, when I want it, without all this formality, in parliament?* The Bishop of *Durham* readily answered; *God forbid, Sir, but you should; you are the breath of our nostrils.* Whereupon the King turned, and said to the Bishop of *Winchester*; *Well, my Lord, what say you?* Sir, replied the Bishop, *I have no skill to judge of parliamentary cases.* The King answered; *No put off, my Lord, answer me presently.* Then, Sir, said he, *I think it lawful for you to take my brother Neale's money, for he offers it."* Biog. Brit. *ANDREWS.* Remark [E]. It has been very common with obnoxious churchmen under the gentle correction of a laugh, to complain, that religion was ridiculed in their persons. Left any such imputation should, upon this occasion, be glanced at me, I think proper to declare, that, in my opinion, this little anecdote is capable of a very serious application to the case in hand. The property that every Protestant has in his religious opinions, is, or ought be, as valuable to him, as the property he has in his purse. Why should he, therefore, give up the former to the commands of church-governors, any more than the other to the arbitrary will of his prince? Perhaps the force and tendency of this question will be more sensibly felt, if we suppose a case, which, if *Land's* canons in 1643 had taken effect, was by no means an impossible one. Let us suppose then *Neale's* axiom to have been fashioned into an article of religion to the following purpose. *The King's Ma-* But

### 380 THE CONFESSIONAL

But it may be demanded, would you have the church to authorize and send forth ministers and

*jefty is the breath of our nostrils; therefore, by the law of God, our whole temporal substance is at his royal disposal without the intervention of any grant from an inferior authority. Suppose this article to have been established, and I will venture to say that Rogeres and Welchmans would readily have been found to prove it from scripture. For example. There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. Here we have a tax, but not one word of a Parliament. And then to clinch it, throw in the text, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and I will be bound to shew that you have as good a scriptural proof for this article, as some commentators have brought to authorize some others that I could name. And can it be supposed that this article having thus gained a settlement among the rest, Doctors and Professors would have been wanting to plead for its everlasting possession, on the bare pretence, "that it would be a weakness and "levity in church-governors, unbecoming their office, and inconsistent with the trust committed to them, — to change their "church-confession as often as any are found, who dislike the "faith and doctrines contained in it." I say the bare pretence, for the premisses from which this weakness and levity are inferred, have no more in them than a pretended Vindication of a general right church-governors are supposed to have to require the clergy to subscribe and assent to some confession of faith and doctrines, without saying a syllable in defence of any particular confession, whose articles may be sufficiently exceptionable in point of scripture authority, to make it unbecoming the office, and inconsistent with the trust committed to Protestant church-governors not to change it. The article being thus established, proved, and fortified, let us farther suppose that Bancroft or Laud had enjoined it to be subscribed by every layman worth one hundred pounds in land, money, or stock, (as indeed without that circumstance such an article would have done nothing for a James or a Charles) on the pain*  
pastors



pastors among the people, without taking any security of them for the faithful discharge of their office, and particularly, without guarding against their preaching false and erroneous doctrines?

Answer: In our office of ordination, there are *eight* questions put to every priest; the answers to the *second, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh* of which, seem to me to contain as ample security

of being refused to trade, bear office, or acquire an increase of property any other way; what, I desire to know, would have been the sentiments of any liberal-minded layman upon such an imposition? Would he without reluctance have sacrificed his temporal property to the doctrine of a church-governor, by an explicit declaration under his hand that the article was agreeable to the word of God? Would the sophistical *Vindication* of a *general* right in church-governors to require a subscribed declaration of the truth of *some* confession of faith and doctrines, have convinced him of the equity, the propriety, the reasonableness, of requiring him to subscribe to the truth of *this* particular article. — I urge these considerations no farther. I perceive indignation arising in the generous spirits of my countrymen at the very suggestion. All the use I would make of it is this. Let but the sensible benevolent layman allow it to be probable, that there are serious and conscientious protestants, who value the property they have in their religious opinions, as much as others do their temporal rights and possessions, and he will want no other argument to pity, and, to his power, to assist them to get quit of the yoke; and as he himself is happily free from *one* of these burthens, to join his brethren who find themselves aggrieved and oppressed by the *other*, in a decent but earnest and ardent solicitation to the legislature that they may be delivered from it.

in

in this behalf, as any Christian church can desire, or can be authorized to demand.

Here the priest declares, and declares it at the altar, "That he is persuaded that the holy scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ; that he has determined, by God's grace, out of the said scriptures, to instruct the people committed to his charge, and to teach nothing (as required of necessity to eternal salvation) but that which he shall be persuaded, may be concluded and proved by the scripture. — [He promises, the Lord being his helper, that he will be ready, with all faithful diligence, to banish and drive away all erroneous and strange doctrines, contrary to God's word<sup>d</sup>;] — that he will use both public

<sup>d</sup> Upon a second consideration, this promise might, perhaps, be better omitted. One honest man may hold doctrines upon a persuasion that they are agreeable to the word of God, which doctrines another honest man may think to be erroneous and strange, and contrary to God's word. It may too be difficult to banish and drive away the doctrines, without banishing and driving away the man who holds them. This is therefore a promise which cannot be kept consistently with the principles of the Protestant religion, supposing the doctrines here meant, to be doctrines *merely* religious; and supposing farther, that by *banishing* and *driving away*, any kind of legal prosecution is intended. But if by *banishing* and *driving away*, no more is meant than opposing to them argument, exhortation, or instruction, undoubtedly every man safely may promise, and every clergyman ought to perform in this way as much as he is able.

" and

## THE CONFSSIONAL 383

"and private monitions, as well to the sick as to  
 "the whole, within his cure, as need shall require,  
 "and occasion shall be given;—that he will be  
 "diligent in prayers, and in reading of the holy  
 "scriptures, and in such studies as help to the  
 "knowledge of the same, laying aside the study  
 "of the world and the flesh;—that he will be  
 "diligent to frame and fashion his own self and  
 "his family according to the doctrine of Christ,  
 "and to make both himself and them, as much  
 "as in him lieth, wholesome examples and pat-  
 "terns to the flock of Christ;—that he will  
 "maintain and set forwards, as much as in him  
 "lieth, quietness, peace, and love, among all  
 "Christian people, and especially among those  
 "that are or shall be committed to his charge."

I omit the *first*, *third*, and *eighth* of these ques-  
 tions, and the answers to them, without any re-  
 mark, because, whatever I or any other person  
 may think of them, these declarations, in my  
 opinion, are what no conscientious minister would  
 refuse to make, and are as good security as any  
 Protestant church can in reason demand, for the  
 due discharge of the pastoral office; and, I be-  
 lieve, I should have few opponents, if I should  
 add, that whoever performs *thus much* of what he  
 promises at his ordination, will give little occa-  
 sion to the church to bind him in any stricter  
 obligation. I will go one step farther still. There  
 is nothing in this declaration, but what the *dis-*  
*senting*

## 384 THE CONFESSIONAL

*senting* clergy themselves might declare : and, being laid down as a common measure for all *licensed* or *tolerated* ministers, one complaint would be effectually removed, namely, that the dissenting clergy are entitled to their privileges and emoluments upon easier terms, than those of the established church.

But, all this while, you will say, we have no evidence of this man's opinions; he may think very differently from the church, when he comes to interpret the scriptures. The words of this declaration are *general* and *indeterminate*; and, after all, they are but *words*. Here is no *subscription*; and consequently nothing whereby the *declarer* may be convicted of falsehood or prevarication, in case he should break his engagements with the church.

I answer to some of these objections by asking some questions. What evidence have you of the opinions of him who subscribes to the xxxix Articles? Do not the very champions of the church insist, that the words of these articles are *general* and *indeterminate*, and susceptible of different senses? Has not this been lately asserted from the pulpit, in the face of the university of *Cambridge*, at the solemn time of commencement, in a sermon afterwards printed, and dispersed all over the nation\*?

\* 1757, by Dr. *Powell*.



## THE CONFSSIONAL 383

For the rest, I take it for granted, that whoever has no objection to the making this declaration, *ore tenus*, in public, will have none to the subscribing his name to it. And, if that will satisfy, it is a circumstance which will readily be given up.

There is, indeed, something in this declaration, that amounts to an acknowledgment of the divine authority of the scriptures; and Dr. *Hartley* having first reprobated all other subscriptions, hath seen fit to add, "That it seems needless, or insnaring to subscribe, even to the scriptures themselves. If to any particular canon, copy, &c. insnaring, because of the many real doubts in these things. If not, it is quite superfluous from the latitude allowed."

I will freely declare, that I think this is spinning the thread too fine. But, before I proceed to offer my sentiments upon the whole of this passage, let us consider, what may be inferred from so much of it, as may be safely allowed; and that is, that to require subscription to any particular copy or canon of scripture, is *insnaring*.

That no man, or body of men, have authority to authenticate *one* copy of the scriptures, rather than another, will, I suppose, appear sufficiently to those who have read and considered what the writers among the Reformed have offered con-

<sup>1</sup> Observations, vol. II. p. 353.

## 306 THE CONFESSIONAL

cerning the superior respect paid to the *Vulgate* by the council of *Trent*. Even the cooler sort of the Roman catholic writers themselves have found this so reasonable and evident, that, to save the honour of the council, they have been obliged to hunt for a more commodious sense of the canon, than the plain words import; that is to say, a sense which does *not* imply that the Fathers of *Trent* intended to authenticate the Latin version in preference to any other <sup>2</sup>.

Hence arises an argument *a fortiori*, against requiring subscription to creeds, articles, or systems, either dogmatical or explanatory, composed and established by human authority. If no body of men have authority to authenticate one copy of the scriptures above another, no body of men have authority to interpret the scriptures, so as to authenticate such interpretation, as a standard for all who receive the scriptures. The encroachment upon Christian liberty is the same in both cases. The authority of the council of *Trent*, in the former case, was disowned on all hands. And concerning the power of Christian magistrates at large, Dr. *Hartley* has truly observed, that "the power which they have from God to inflict punishment upon such as disobey, and to con-

<sup>2</sup> *Le Clerc*, Sentimens de quelques Theologiens de Hollande sur l'Histoire Critique du Vieux Testament, par Mr. *Simon*. Lettre xiv. p. 311, 312, &c. and Defense des Sentimens, &c. Lettre xiii. p. 327. e. q. fl.

"fine the natural liberty of acting within certain  
"bounds, for the common good of their sub-  
"jects, is of a nature very foreign to the pre-  
"tences for confining opinions by discourage-  
"ments and punishments <sup>b</sup>."

I cannot, however, come into this worthy per-  
son's sentiments, with respect to the *inutility* of  
subscribing to the scriptures with more latitude,  
let the subscriber pitch upon (for his own use)  
what copy or canon you will.

It has been observed over and over, that, not-  
withstanding the variations of so many MSS. of  
the New Testament, "there is not one various  
"reading, chuse it as awkwardly as you can,  
"by which one article of faith or moral pre-  
"cept is either perverted or lost, ——— or in  
"which the various reading is of any conse-  
"quence to the main of religion, nay, perhaps,  
"is not wholly synonymous in the view of com-  
"mon readers, and quite insensible in any mo-  
"dern version <sup>i</sup>."

Again, with respect to the canon; those books  
which have been among the *αντιλεγόμενα*, are al-  
lowed to be perfectly consistent, in point of doc-  
trine and precept, with those whose authority is  
more indisputable, by reason of their universal  
reception; which latter, however, of themselves,

<sup>b</sup> Observations, vol. II. p. 351.

<sup>i</sup> Bentley's Remarks on a discourse of Free-thinking, 6th  
edit. part i. p. 69.—72.

388 THE CONFESSIONAL.

contain all things necessary to be believed, or known, in the Christian religion. So that whether you admit or reject the doubtful books, it is the same rule of faith and manners, by which you are guided.

This being admitted, it is surely a sufficient description of the scriptures, to call them *the books of the Old and New Testament, generally received among Christians*; and for a public pastor to declare, that he believes the scriptures, and will make the contents of them the rule of his teaching, is a very moderate security, and no more than the society with which he is connected may with reason expect.

I have, indeed, met with some gentlemen, sufficiently disgusted with the present forms and objects of our subscriptions, who would propose, that the candidate should deliver in an account of his belief of the scriptures, and of the principal articles of faith he draws from thence, in some form of *his own*. "The man himself," say these worthy persons, "best knows his own conceptions concerning the authority, as well as the contents, of the scriptures; and, by expressing those conceptions in his own language, he will convey to whom it may concern, a much clearer idea of his reverence for those sacred oracles, and of the weight and authority he ascribes to them, than can possibly be gathered from his assent to any other form composed by others."

"Not



\* Not to mention the absurdity of obliging men to  
 " confess *their own* faith in the words of others,  
 " who have no more authority or any better pre-  
 " tence to interpret the scriptures than them-  
 " selves.

" They," continue these gentlemen, " who are  
 " fond of deriving our rituals, and other eccle-  
 " siastical *apparatus*, from primitive antiquity,  
 " will find, that this was the ancient method  
 " taken to prove the orthodoxy of Christian  
 " Bishops; and indeed seems to be much better  
 " calculated for the purpose of a test, than either  
 " the present Articles, or any others for which  
 " they should be exchanged."

With these gentlemen I so far agree, as to de-  
 sire that such an experiment might be made *for*  
*a limited time*, and in the case only of our *elder*  
 divines, who may be supposed to have formed  
 such judgment on these matters, as they are not  
 likely to retract. Many of these take institution  
 to new preferments in an advanced age, and may  
 be supposed to have closed their studies, or, as a  
 certain author has it, *made up their minds*, with  
 respect to all theological opinions, when they  
 offer themselves to the trial.

But, I believe, the certain consequence would  
 be, that they who should be appointed to receive  
 these formularies, perceiving a wide difference in  
 the sentiments of these veterans, many of whom  
 would be found to be men of the soundest learn-

### 390 THE CONFESSIONAL

ing and brightest capacities, would think it much better, these candidates should be left to the enjoyment of their own opinions in secret, than that they, or the church they belong to, should, by such rescripts under their hands, be exposed to the perverse reflections that might be made upon their respective variations from each other.

Nothing, indeed, could be more insnaring to the younger sort of candidates for the ministry, than this method proposed by these worthy persons above-mentioned. These formularies might be produced against them at some future period, when, in the course of their studies, they had found reason to change their minds. An inconvenience, to which the declaration I have proposed, and which is drawn as above from the Ordination-office, is not liable. There the candidate is supposed to be still carrying on the study of the scriptures, "along with such [other] studies, as help to the [farther] knowledge of the "same;" a supposition, which seems to me to be absolutely inconsistent with *any peremptory* assent to the Articles, *as agreeable to the word of God*, at his first entrance upon his ministry.

There is another circumstance which recommends these forms of declaration extremely, and that is the *modesty* with which the answers to the several questions are expressed, agreeable to that state of *probation*, in which the compilers of the office knew young candidates must remain, at least for some considerable time.

## THE CONFESSIONAL. 391

"Are you *persuaded*," says the second question, "that the holy scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrine required of necessity for eternal salvation, through faith in Jesus Christ?" — The candidate answers, "I am so *persuaded*." And so he very well may be, without having examined the scriptures with that application and accuracy, which are necessary to form a judgment upon their *whole* contents. The object of *this* persuasion lies within a small compass; and the knowledge necessary to produce it, may be obtained with a thousandth part of the pains necessary to persuade an ingenuous mind, that our xxxix Articles of religion are in perfect agreement with the word of God.

When we consider the case of candidates for orders in general, it may well be questioned, whether the *persuasion* above-mentioned is not as far as the majority of them can safely go.

Many of them, in the northern dioceses especially, come immediately from a grammar-school, where they have thought of nothing but learning Latin and Greek. At the universities, the point for the first four years, is to qualify themselves for their first degree, which they may take with the utmost honour and credit, without ever having seen the inside of a Bible<sup>s</sup>. And it should

<sup>s</sup> "Young men," said Dr. Prideaux, "frequently come to the university, without any knowledge or tincture of religion at all; and have little opportunity of improving themselves

seem, by an anecdote in the *Life of Dr. Humphrey Prideaux*, as if it were determined, that, during that interval, it is better they should not.

That anecdote is as follows. “*Dr. Busby offered to found two catechistical lectures, with an endowment of 100 l. per annum each, for instructing the under-graduates in the rudiments of the Christian religion, provided all the said under-graduates should be obliged to attend the said lectures, and none of them be admitted to the degree of Bachelors of Arts, till after having been examined by the catechist as to their knowledge in the doctrines and precepts of the Christian religion, and by him approved of. — But this condition being rejected by both universities, the benefaction was rejected therewith, and the church hath ever since suffered for the want of it.*”

Our universities are generally esteemed to be so far out of the reach of all reprehension, that I

“therein, whilst under-graduates, because the course of their studies inclines them to philosophy, and other kinds of learning; and they are usually admitted to their first degree of Bachelors of Arts, with the same ignorance, as to all sacred learning, as when first admitted into the university; and many of them, as soon as they have taken that degree, offering themselves for orders, are too often admitted to be teachers in the church, when they are only fit to be catechumens therein.” *Life of Dr. H. Prideaux*, printed for Knapton, 1748. p. 91.

<sup>a</sup> Ibid. p. 92. *Dr. Busby* was not ignorant, with what tincture of religion these youngsters either came to him or went from him.

should



should not have ventured to have retailed this little piece of history upon the credit of a less responsible voucher than Dr. *Prideaux*. But as the fact stands upon so good authority, I hope I may be indulged in a few reflections upon it, without being accused of *outraging* these respectable bodies, for which I have the utmost veneration<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> They who will be at the pains to look into the end of the *Preface* to the second edition of the *Divine Legation*, published in the year 1742, will find enough to frighten any man from ever hinting at any blemishes in our universities. By the sacred fence with which they are there inclosed, one would think every gremial as safe from *impugners*, as an article of faith is, when it hath once got into an *established confession*. The *Prefacer*, perhaps, did not then know that they had been attacked by any more considerable person than the addle-headed Dr. *Webster*; much less that the eminent Dr. *Prideaux* had proposed, among other necessary regulations in these seats of learning, to have a new college erected in each by the name of *DRONE-HALL*, for reasons there specified, by no means honourable to the academical bodies. If I mistake not, *two* editions of the *Divine Legation* have since appeared without *that* Preface, which indeed would with a very ill grace have introduced to our notice a book, wherein such freedoms are taken with *THE KING'S PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY* in one of the universities, and matter of ridicule and contempt raised from circumstances of the office, common to *all professors* in the same chair. I have seen a list of the *compliments* paid to the learned and worthy Professor in the performance above mentioned, drawn out into one view, for which, according to the opinion of very competent judges, the Professor might have made his *concurrent* a *legal* return, in a way, however, which would have shewn the little propriety of dedicating a *thing*, with the title the lawyers gave it, to the LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND.

In my humble opinion, the most reasonable account that could be given of the motives of these learned bodies for rejecting a benefaction of this sort, would be, that sufficient care is already taken for the Christian instruction of these younger students, without the aid of a *supernumerary* catechist. If so, both these doctors must have been mistaken, the one in describing the distemper, the other in indicating the method of cure.

The *rejection*, indeed, is in the narrative put to the account of the *condition*, perhaps because the catechist, after the candidate had satisfied his examiners in philosophy, might have it in his power to put a negative upon him, for deficiency in Christian knowledge, which would look like an hardship; and the rather, as there seems to be an expedient already in the hands of both universities, calculated to answer all the ends of appointing a particular casuist.

I have since learned, from some more recent publications, that the same hand hath been more lately full as liberal to another *Professor* of the other university, lest *both* should not equally partake of its favours. In this last instance (such is his distress) he finds himself obliged to pull off his own solemn *inquisitorial* robe, and force it on to the shoulders of the worthy *Professor*. After which, he himself drolls away in the *Querpo* of a *pickle herring*, first to divert, and then to escape from, the just indignation of his affronted audience. See a late *Letter to the R. R. Author of the Div. Leg. of Moses Demonstrated, in Answer to the Appendix to the fifth Volume of that Work.*

For,

For, if I am not misinformed, in both universities, every Master of Arts hath a right to examine every candidate for a Bachelor's degree, and a power of putting a negative upon him, and as much for a deficiency in Christian knowledge, as for any other default. Upon inquiry, however, I am told, that few if any candidates have their degree postponed on that account. Perhaps some may think it is, because they are seldom or never examined in that branch, for a reason which the universities think very sufficient, and which operates equally to the exclusion of an appointed catechist.

Let us suppose this reason to be the impropriety of intermixing catechistical examinations with those which ascertain the candidate's qualifications for a degree in arts, and of a catechist's interfering in the conferring such degree; yet might not the *condition* be model'd by a small alteration, so as to render such a benefaction eligible both to the universities and the public?

Suppose, for example, no academical candidate should be promoted to the office of *deacon*, without exhibiting to the bishop, among the rest of his papers, a testimonial from the academical catechist of his proficiency in Christian knowledge? It does not seem at first sight at all more proper, that the *arts* which qualify a man for a bachelor's degree should of themselves qualify him for the Christian ministry, than that Christian know-

knowledge alone should qualify a man for a degree in arts.

But here I shall certainly be told, that this is the affair of the Bishops, and not of the Universities; and that it is an unwarrantable reflexion upon their Lordships to suppose, they should want to be informed by a catechist, of the abilities of a candidate in that branch of knowledge, which is the particular object of their own examinations.

To this I can only answer in the words of Dr. *Prideaux* above-cited, "Many who have taken their first degree, ARE TOO OFTEN ADMITTED to be *teachers in the church*, when they are only fit to be *catechumens*." Perhaps, matters may have mended since the days of Dr. *Prideaux*; or, if not, the *whole* fault may not belong to the Bishops and their Examiners. For if, as the worthy Dean of *Norwich* hath observed, "Bishops are often deceived by *false testimonials*," the Universities may come in for a share of the blame, since they give as ample testimonials, and often upon as slender grounds (particularly with respect to *Christian knowledge*), as country ministers.

In the mean time, these considerations, as matters now stand, make it still more necessary, that the church (to save the credit of all parties) should content herself with the declaration, framed from the Ordination-office, set forth above.



above. This declaration not only admits of *improvements* in theological learning, but exhibits the candidate as *determined* to make them; and surely the professing such determination should be no trifling part of the security he gives to the church. And after that, to require the same candidate to subscribe to a system of opinions, or *interpretations of scripture*, established in perpetuity, and which he may not *gain say* at any future period (notwithstanding what he may find in the scripture to the contrary) on the peril of being excommunicated *ipso facto*, is not only absolutely to preclude him from all future improvements, but likewise disabling him from performing his promise to any good purpose, *viz.* "to be diligent in reading the holy scriptures, and in such studies as help to the knowledge of the same."

"No, says a late notable Casuist, young people may give a general assent to the Articles, *on the authority of others*; more cannot be expected or understood to be done by those who are just beginning to exercise their reason,—by which means room is left for *improvements* in theology k."

Which, as I take it, implies a supposition that these *young* subscribers are left at liberty to *retract* their assent to the Articles, if, in the progress of

\* See Dr. Powell's Sermon, on Commencement-Sunday, 1757.

their

their studies, they find what they assented to inconsistent with their farther discoveries and improvements in theology. And, if this is *really* the case, why would not the preacher speak out?

This sermon, so far as I know, is the last formal *Defence* of the subscriptions required in the church of *England*, that hath yet appeared; and is so well calculated to *make all ends meet*, that it is a thousand pities it should ever be superseded by any new production upon the subject, which should *change the posture of Defence*<sup>1</sup>; particu-

<sup>1</sup> Father *Baron's* maxim, *Malum bene positum ne moveto*, should never be out of the eye of him, who takes upon him to contend for the *perpetuity* of particular human forms and systems of religion. The sermon mentioned above had placed and left subscriptions in the most commodious position imaginable, namely, upon the broad bottom of a latitude of which no man could see the extent or limits; a latitude calculated "on purpose to admit " within the pale of the church, men of *various*, and even *opposite* principles." There was no fear, that the *honesty* of any subscriber should, upon this plan, be called in question; for, " the larger its compass is, the more *honest* men will it comprehend; and perhaps there is no danger, even in times of the " greatest freedom and candor, that it should become too wide." It would be hard to say what religious principles a man must entertain, who could not, upon this footing, *honestly* subscribe any confession. Even they, " who are advanced a little farther into " life than children," might upon the Doctor's plan safely subscribe the xxxix Articles; " for no man would conceive any thing farther to be meant by *their* subscriptions, than that they acknowledged themselves members of the church of *England*; and declared that they had no objection to her Articles, but a *general belief* of them, grounded upon the authority of others;" and all  
larly

larly, as (in conjunction with two or three other

this, notwithstanding every subscriber "acknowledges, by his subscription, *willingly* and *ex animo*, all and every the said Articles to be agreeable to the word of God." See Dr. Powell's Commencement-Sermon, 1757, p. 13 & 17. and Canon xxxvi. Now, every man of common sense sees that nothing can be more ridiculous than to join the idea of a *Test*, to subscriptions allowed in *this*, or indeed in *any*, latitude, where the subscription required is to a Confession agreed upon *for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion*. And yet, no doubt but this reverend Doctor's expedient has been most thankfully accepted by a great many subscribers, within the last ten years, and the rather, as in all that time the church hath not declared against it.—And now, most unseasonably, steps in the learned Dr. Rutherford, and he, by reviving the notion that established Confessions, even in *Protestant* churches, "are designed to be *Tests*, by which the Governors of the church may find out, whether they who desire "to be appointed pastors and teachers, assent to the faith and "doctrines contained in them, or not," impounds all subscribers, once more, within the ancient pale of *church-authority*, and confines them to the *uniform sense* of church-governors. Upon Dr. Powell's plan, church-governors can *find out* nothing by subscriptions, but that the subscribers are, or, for any thing they can *find out* to the contrary, may be, of different judgments, various principles, and opposite opinions, even with respect to every one of the xxxix Articles. To say, that the Governors of the church can *find out* by subscriptions, taken in the latitude allowed by Dr. Powell, that the subscribers assent to the faith and doctrines contained in the established Confession, is to suppose, that the established Confession containeth *various Faiths*, and *opposite Doctrines*; a supposition for which Dr. Rutherford's system leaves no room, for he declares, that "whoever subscribes to "the faith and doctrines contained in the established Confession, "when he does not assent to them, frustrates the purpose for "which such Confessions were established." *Charge*, p. 13.

tracts,

tracts, lately published) it will greatly assist our

And what the Professor means by *assenting to them*, he explains elsewhere; namely, the giving Church-governors sufficient assurance of the *soundness* of their faith and doctrines," p. 3. But of *two or more opposite doctrines*, one or more must be *unsound*; and the mere act of subscribing, where the *uniform sense* of Church-governors, with respect to the faith and doctrines to be subscribed to, is not first established, will not give Church-governors *sufficient*, or indeed *any* assurance, which of the opposite doctrines the subscriber assents to. To do Dr. *Percell* justice, however, his scheme has much more of a *Protestant* air, than that of the learned Professor. The great and leading Protestant principle is, that the scriptures are the *only Rule of Faith* to every Christian, whether he is a clergyman or a layman. But whoever is required to assent to human interpretations of scripture, as a *Test* of the *soundness* of his Faith, is required to adopt *another* Rule of Faith, substituted in the place of the scriptures; and is so far required to desert the *only* Protestant Rule of Faith, or, at the best, to abide by it under such restrictions as exclude his right of judging for himself. But this, Dr. *Rutherford* asserts, Church-governors have a *right* to require of the Clergy; and if it is not required of the Laity, it is not, it seems, for want of the good-will of the Church-governors, for they "understand the Laity to be as much *bound in conscience* to believe what is contained in these human interpretations of "scripture, as the Clergy who *declare* their assent to them." The Professor says indeed, that "no church has a right to make "use of its Confession" [*i. e.* its interpretations of scripture] "as a *Law*, to compel the candidates for holy Orders to assent "to the propositions contained in it, but only as a *Test* to discover whether they do assent to them or not." But what if they do *not* assent to them? Why then the Confession immediately operates as a *Test-law*, and excludes them from certain privileges, from which, had the scriptures been allowed to be their *only Rule of Faith*, they would not have been excluded. And wherein, after all this quibbling, does the learned Professor

posterity



posterity in forming a true judgment of the *libe-*

fessor's plan of church-authority differ from that of Popery, but in this circumstance, that *his* Protestant Church-governors *have* all the benefits of infallibility, without the absurdity of pretending to it? See Dedication to Pope Clement XI. p. iii. Ed. 8vo. 1715. But Dr. Powell's scheme has indeed, as I said, a little more of a Protestant aspect. For though he does not explain himself on the right of *private judgment*, claimed by Protestants, of interpreting the scripture for themselves, being wholly silent on that head, yet he makes as much room for *private judgment* in interpreting established Confessions as heart can wish: and is so far from *supposing* Church-governors to be *always in the right*, that he says, "Every sincere man who makes a public declaration, will consider it as meaning what it is usually conceived to mean. I will not add, by those who require this declaration; not [what it is conceived to mean] by the Governors of the church, because they cannot properly be said to require that which they have no authority to dispense with, or alter." *Obscurity* is one of the *Essentials of Casuistry*. But, so far as I understand this passage, it imports, "that the declarer may very sincerely conceive his declaration to mean, what the Governors of the church do *not* conceive it to mean;" and this must be as true of an hundred declarers as of one. *Sermon*, p. 12. Whereas Dr. Rutherford says, that "the church requires evidence of the candidates for the ministry, that their faith and doctrines are such, AS IT JUDGES TO BE AGREEABLE to the true religion of Christ." And again: "The church claims a right to secure the teaching of such doctrines to its members, AS IT JUDGES, UPON THE BEST INFORMATION IT CAN GET, to be agreeable to the truth of the Gospel." *Charge*, p. 5. 18. This security depends upon the evidence above mentioned. But it is impossible the church or [what is the same thing, in the present case] church-governors should ever have *this evidence*, if they who declare their assent to the Confession, may sincerely conceive their declaration to mean, what the church or church governors do *not* conceive

*tal sentiments* of the present age on the article.

it to mean. It appears then, upon the whole, that it had been Dr. *Rutherford's* wisest way to have left subscriptions upon that ample foundation upon which Dr. *Powell* had placed them. By pinning down subscribers to the judgment of the church or church-governors, as he has done, he hath only given occasion to observe that *Papists* equally with *Protestant* churches fall within his *Vindication*; and his feeble endeavours throughout his *Second Vindication* to rid himself of that imputation, only serve to fix it the faster upon him. For my part, I see only one hope he has left us. The next adventurer in the cause may probably do as much for him as he hath done for Dr. *Powell*, and leave us just where we were. In which case, I dare say, they whom he writes for will approve of his acquiescence, without withholding the reward of his by-past labours. It is indeed seriously to be lamented, that, after all the lights and advantages that have been vouchsafed to this happy country, and the many deliverances and escapes we have had from civil and ecclesiastical tyranny, there should still be found among us Divines, who would once more shackle us in the fetters of *Church-authority*; and particularly, that such Divines should be found in those seats of learning and liberal science, where every possible encouragement ought to be given to freedom of enquiry, and the pursuit of truth, unincumbered with the ligatures of system, and perfectly stript of the vizard of scholastic sophistry. With what spirit can a youth of ingenuous probity of mind, pursue his scriptural studies, when he reflects, that whatever discoveries he may make, upon whatever conviction he may form his religious principles, he hath already given the church security to be determined by her Confession, upon the authority of others, in terms which could not have been stronger or more express, had he done it after the most minute examination of its contents? With what alacrity can he go forward in quest of religious knowledge, in order to qualify himself for a faithful minister of the Gospel, under anxieties and suspicions that the word of God may disagree with  
of

of *moral honesty*, as well as give them a just idea of our *improvements in theology*, and how far we

the established Confession, to which, however, if he does not subscribe in the same *positive and absolute terms*, he is told, *he must apply himself to some other way of getting a livelihood*; and over and besides have the mortification to be upbraided as a *revolter* from the assent he had given, though it was merely upon *trust*, by a hundred mean, narrow-minded men, who have taken the hint from their own subscriptions, never to think for themselves? The time was when the moderation of the church of England gave her some advantage over the established church of Scotland, which at that period was the more rigorous of the two, in adhering to her doctrinal system. Were Dr. Rutherford's Vindication to be the standard of orthodoxy among us, we should soon be in a fair way of losing this advantage. The language of the most respectable of the clergy of the church of Scotland, is become the language of truth, reason, peace, and Christian liberty. And it is with pleasure I can now close my additions with a specimen of it, delivered in a public discourse, about three months after Dr. Rutherford's Charge, and on a similar occasion.—“The ministers of religion,” says this truly Christian preacher, “are bound to lead the way to union, by keeping at the utmost distance from spiritual dominion over the faith and consciences of their brethren. Neither, says the Apostle Peter, 1 Ep. v. 3. *as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock*. And his beloved brother Paul to the same purpose; 2 Cor. i. 24. *Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith, that is, by sincere, private, personal conviction, ye stand*. After such declarations as these from those who were divinely inspired, to claim the dominion of peoples faith and conscience, is highly unreasonable; and to comply with it, is both foolish and wicked. It is, in effect, to set aside real infallible authority, and to substitute that which is weak and fallible in the room of it. From thence too, come divisions, heresies, strifes very calamitous. Our blessed Lord foresaw

# 404 THE CONFESSIONAL

go beyond the zeal and dexterity of our forefathers, in accommodating plain, simple, naked Christianity, with the arts, ornaments, opulence,

“ this, and therefore expressly enjoined, *Matth. xxiii. 9, 10.*  
 “ that we should call no man father upon earth, because one is our  
 “ Father, who is in heaven: neither to be called masters, because  
 “ one is our Master, even Christ. Jesus the Son of God, he is  
 “ Lord of all; Lord of our conscience, Lord of our faith;  
 “ and now he administers his government, by the written rule  
 “ of his word. This rule is open and free to all; even the  
 “ teachers of it themselves are not, under a pretence of inter-  
 “ preting what it contains, to introduce their own authority, to  
 “ usurp mastery and dominion. No; they are, in all humi-  
 “ lity and diligence, to assist their brethren, but not to impose  
 “ their interpretations upon them. The hurt which has been  
 “ done to truth and love, by affecting spiritual dominion, is scarce  
 “ to be imagined by those who are ignorant of the history of  
 “ the church; and those who are in any tolerable measure ac-  
 “ quainted with that history, will need no other argument to  
 “ fall in with the counsel of union and peace which I now pro-  
 “ pose. They will rejoice in the liberty wherewith Jesus Christ  
 “ has made them free; they will steadfastly adhere to it in their  
 “ own practice, and they will publish far and wide, as their  
 “ influence can reach, that *The supreme Judge, by which all*  
 “ *controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of*  
 “ *councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and pri-*  
 “ *vate spirits, are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are*  
 “ *to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the*  
 “ *scriptures; that in regard all Councils and Synods, whether*  
 “ *general or particular, may err, and many have erred; therefore*  
 “ *they are not to be made a rule of faith or practice, but to be*  
 “ *used as an help in both.* Thus we see the wisdom and modesty  
 “ of our own church, and by this, no doubt, the wisest and  
 “ best of her teachers will ever think it their duty, to propose  
 “ their own interpretations, and likewise to explain all the  
 power,



## THE CONFESSIONAL. 405

power, and policy of the kingdoms of this world.

"other acts, decrees, and rules, which, from the time of adopting that *confessional help*, have, or may yet proceed from her\*." *Christian Unity illustrated and recommended from the Example of the primitive Church.* A Sermon preached before the Synod of GLASGOW and AYR, at GLASGOW, October 14th, 1766. By WILLIAM DALRYMPLE, A. M. one of the Ministers of AYR. Printed at Glasgow, by R. and A. Foulis, p. 16, 17, 18.

\* The former part of the above-cited passage is taken from chap. I. sect. 2. and the latter part from chap. XXXI. sect. iv. of the *Confession of Faith* agreed upon by the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, 1647. which (after what Mr. Dalrymple has said above), one would think, is a sufficient proof that the Westminster Confession must be the established Confession of the church of Scotland at this day. It is true, the church of Scotland had another Confession at the beginning of its Reformation, which, I apprehend, is now totally laid aside: and perhaps this is the only instance of a national church's changing its established Confession since the Reformation; and had the church of Scotland adopted the above-cited passages ONLY, in lieu of the original system which was superseded, omitting all the rest of the Confession from which they are taken, she would have been the wisest church in Europe: and so, if I conjecture right, thinks the judicious author of this extract, whatever may be his opinion of the *helps* to be had from Councils and Confessions.

D d 2 POSTSCRIPT.

## POSTSCRIPT.

I Did not expect that what I mentioned as only *probable*, would so very soon come to pass; I mean, that “ the learned Professor *Rutherford’s* “ plan of *Vindication* would be superseded by some “ future advocate for subscriptions, and that we “ should be happily brought back to Dr. *Powell’s* “ more enlarged and expanded Hypothesis, “ under which every honest subscriber might “ please himself with whatever interpretation of “ the Articles would best suit his peculiar notions.” But, since I sent the last note to the press, I find this considerable service hath been done for those whose minds *The Confessional* may have disturbed, by the ingenious author of a little piece, intituled, *A Plea for the Subscription of the Clergy to the thirty-nine Articles of Religion*; who hath once more placed subscriptions upon the ample basis of an indefinite latitude. I am not indeed quite satisfied as to the propriety of his title-page. It would, in my opinion, have agreed better with the contents, had he called his performance, *A Plea for political Christianity*, as he seems to resolve all the ends and uses of religion partly

partly into the *power*, and partly into the *convenience*, of the civil magistrate; so far, if I understand his gloss upon *John xviii. 36*, as to make it a question, whether Christ hath any subjects upon earth? And upon this footing, what can be his quarrel with the Clerks of *St. Ignatius*? Surely he does not mistake them for his adversaries. Hath not Father *Philips* told us very lately, that the *Smithfield-fires* were lighted up by the laws of the state, and plainly insinuated that those executions were no more than *such self-defence as was necessary with regard to the tempers and dispositions of those opponents of the establishment* who suffered in them? Was not the *plea* of the Star-chamber the very same for flitting the noses and cropping the ears of the *opponents* of those days? And has not every defender, whether of *Pole* or of *Laud*, insisted that these were *lawful means of self-defence*? And why *lawful*, but because they were *means* established by law? If the *lawfulness* of the means of self-defence in matters of religion is put upon any other issue, we must go to the *written word*, and drop the Powers of this world. But then, alas! our orator's *Plea* must drop with them; and that were a thousand pities, as it might infer the loss of the *fee*. It is indeed a little unfortunate for the particular system on the behalf of which our advocate is retained, that he hath not been able to find any  
other

other authority for those Articles which do not concern the *Confession of the true Faith*, and the *doctrine of the Sacraments*, but of the *canonical sort*. But let us not be discouraged. Who knows but, notwithstanding what the late Lord Chancellor *Hardwicke* hath said upon the subject, there may be some dormant statute, or some lurking clause in a statute not quite obsolete, which may be made to establish the Canons of 1603? Why not indeed the Act of Uniformity, 13 Car. II? A very short and clear syllogism seems to do the business to a nicety. The Canons of 1603 are always bound up with our Folio Common-prayer-book, as well as the *Declaration* at the head of the xxxix Articles. *Ergo*, they are *part of the book*. *Ergo*, they are established by the said Act of Uniformity. And let no man be surprized at the novelty of the argument. It was found out about fifteen years ago, that Queen *Elizabeth's* Injunctions of 1559, were in as full force at that time as they were the first hour of their publication. For why, says the learned pleader for them, they are found in Bishop *Sparrow's* Collection, along with the xxxix Articles, the Office of Ordination, &c. which are in full force. I do not see why this reasoning should not do for our Advocate. Dr. *Anthony Ellys* was as certainly a Bishop, and *knew* what was *right* and *just*, as well as Dr. *Anthony Sparrow*. — The ingenious *Pleader* hath been, I understand,



derstand, particularly *civil* to the *Confessional*. He hath enriched his copy of it with his own valuable manuscript-notes, and hath repeatedly dignified it with *kind* and *candid* notice in his printed Plea; on which account it gives me concern that I am prevented, for the present, from paying my respects to him in a more particular manner. Indeed, I should hardly know how to set about it, if I were more at leisure. He appears, by turns, on *both* sides of the *true* question, and, by turns, on *neither*; and it might perhaps be difficult to find him without a loop-hole whereat to escape. On these considerations, I am inclined to repose myself in an opinion, which it seems is become pretty general, that the *Confessional*, in its present state, is somewhat a better answer to the *Plea*, than the *Plea* is to the *Confessional*. This must be my excuse for letting this Performance pass with the public at its full value, without any farther remarks. But if the learned writer of the *Plea* meant no more than a little indulgence of his Genius in the Province of Controversy, he may now have an opportunity of displaying his Talent to good purpose, by attempting the relief of Dr. *Rutherford*, whom the second Letter of his very able and ingenious *Examiner* hath reduced to a very pityable distress, from which there seems no way to disengage him, but by claiming him from those Catholic Cantons, where

the aforesaid *Examiner* hath obliged him to take shelter \*, as a subject of those *civil Powers*, in behalf of whose rights over conscience, this accomplished Pleader hath retained himself.

\* See *The incomparable Letter to the Rev. Dr. Rutherford, &c. occasioned by his Second Vindication of the Right of Protestant Churches to require the Clergy to subscribe to an established Confession of Faith and Doctrines. From the EXAMINER of the First.* Printed for Johnson, Davenport, and Cadell.

F I N I S.



